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THE BOBBSEY TWINS BOOKS

By Laura Lee Hope

THE BOBBSEY TWINS

IN THE COUNTRY
AT THE SEASHORE
AT SCHOOL
AT SNOW LODGE
ON A HOUSEBOAT
AT MEADOW BROOK
AT HOME
IN A GREAT CITY
ON BLUEBERRY ISLAND
ON THE DEEP BLUE SEA
IN WASHINGTON
IN THE GREAT WEST
AT CEDAR CAMP
AT THE COUNTY FAIR
CAMPING OUT
AND BABY MAY
KEEPING HOUSE
AT CLOVERBANK
AT CHERRY CORNERS
AND THEIR SCHOOLMATES
TREASURE HUNTING
AT SPRUCE LAKE
WONDERFUL SECRET
AT THE CIRCUS

ON AN AIRPLANE TRIP
SOLVE A MYSTERY
ON A RANCH
IN ESKIMO LAND
IN A RADIO PLAY
AT WINDMILL COTTAGE
AT LIGHTHOUSE POINT
AT INDIAN HOLLOW
AT THE ICE CARNIVAL
IN THE LAND OF COTTON
IN ECHO VALLEY
ON THE PONY TRAIL
AT MYSTERY MANSION
AT SUGAR MAPLE HILL
IN MEXICO
TOY SHOP
IN TULIP LAND
IN RAINBOW VALLEY
OWN LITTLE RAILROAD
AT WHITESAIL HARBOR
AND THE HORSESHOE
RIDDLE
AT BIG BEAR POND
ON A BICYCLE TRIP
OWN LITTLE FERRYBOAT

AT PILGRIM ROCK

*Cynthia Morrow
21st & Spang Ave*

The Bobbsey Twins and Their Schoolmates

By
LAURA LEE HOPE

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CHAPTER I

GOING ON A PICNIC

"COME on, Flossie and Freddie!" called Nan Bobbsey to the smaller twins. "Hurry, or you'll be late! Mother, please make Freddie and Flossie hurry!" she begged.

"Come, my dears," Mrs. Bobbsey admonished. "Don't keep Bert and Nan waiting. The picnic will not wait for you, remember."

"Is Bert all ready?" asked Nan, who was acting as a "little mother" on this eventful day when the four twins, and many of their schoolmates, were to go on the big picnic which the Lakeport Church held once a year in Oak Grove.

"Yes, I'm all ready," announced Bert Bobbsey, who was Nan's twin brother. "You won't have to wait for me!"

There sounded a banging, thumping noise from the side porch where Bert was waiting. Nan was in the dining room trying to hurry Flossie and Freddie out of the kitchen.

"My goodness! what's that?" cried Nan.

"Maybe Bert fell down the steps!" came in the laughing voice of Flossie, and Nan had a glimpse of her little sister's light, fluffy hair as Flossie poked her head in from the kitchen.

"No, I didn't fall. I just dropped my baseball bat," answered Bert.

"Oh, are you going to play ball?" shouted Freddie, dashing through the dining room out on the porch where his older brother was waiting. "Let me play, too!" and in his excitement Freddie nearly dropped a shoe box he was carrying under his arm. The box had holes cut in the sides and top.

"You're too small to play ball with us big boys," Bert replied to the little fellow. "But maybe you can get up a game with some of your own chums," he added kindly.

"Maybe I can," agreed Freddie. "Will you let us take a ball?"

"The ball we play with would be too hard for you," explained Bert. "You'd better take one of your soft rubber balls."

"Oh, yes," Freddie agreed. "Hey, Flossie!" he called, as he ran back into the kitchen, "you find a soft rubber ball and get me a stick for a bat so we can play ball."

"Look here!" exclaimed Nan a little impatiently, as she watched Freddie disappear into the kitchen with that shoe box under his arm. "Are you two ever coming along? We'll be late for the picnic! The auto busses are going to start from the church at eight o'clock and it's most that now! Come on, Freddie!"

"All right! In a minute!" he replied. "I have to get something first!"

"Never mind about looking for a rubber ball," went on Nan. "Some of the other boys may have one. Hurry, Flossie! Mother, do make them come along, or we'll be late! Bert and I don't want to miss the fun!"

"I'm all ready!" announced Flossie, ap-

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pearing out of the kitchen. "It's Freddie! He's waiting!"

"What are you waiting for?" asked Nan of her small brother.

"I guess he's putting himself up a special lunch," laughed Bert, as he thought of the shoe box his small brother carried.

"Oh, Freddie Bobbsey!" exclaimed Nan, with a sigh of despair, "you don't need to bother about lunch! The church is going to have a lunch for everybody! Aren't they, Mother?"

"Yes, no lunches need be carried," answered Mrs. Bobbsey, for she was one of the committee of ladies who had helped get up the picnic, and one feature of it was that a general dinner would be given by the church.

"I'm not taking anything to eat!" answered Freddie's voice from the kitchen. He could be heard scurrying around, however, and now and then Flossie laughed.

"What are those two up to, I wonder!" exclaimed Nan. "I'm going to see!"

"Well, say," murmured Bert from the side porch, where he was swinging his bat, practicing to knock a home run, "if we don't

start pretty soon we might as well stay at home. We'll never get to the picnic with the others!"

"That's what I say!" announced Nan. She fairly ran into the kitchen now and, reaching there, she was heard to cry:

"Oh, Freddie Bobbsey! What in the world are you trying to do?"

"He's trying to catch one of the kittens!" chuckled Flossie.

Well might Nan inquire what her small brother was doing, for when she reached the kitchen she saw him crawling under the table with that same shoe box.

"Trying to catch a kitten!" exclaimed Bert, who had followed Nan. "What's the idea?"

"I'm going to take one of the kittens to our picnic!" announced Freddie, thrusting his red face out from beneath the table, for he was flushed from the exercise. "They've never been to a picnic and I want to take one!"

He made another dive for the small bunch of fur—one of several playful kittens which had lately come to the home of the Bobbsey twins. But the little cat was too lively for Freddie and, arching its back and fluffing its

tail in pretended anger, it darted out of the door and away.

"Come back here! Come back!" cried Freddie. "I'll take you to the picnic!"

Out from beneath the table he scrambled, but before he could dart after the kitten Bert caught hold of him, saying:

"No you don't! If you're going to this picnic with us come along! Let the kitten alone!"

"Were you going to put it in the shoe box?" asked Nan, trying not to laugh, for she was a bit provoked at Freddie.

"Sure, I was going to put it in the shoe box," he answered. "'Twouldn't hurt it! Look! I have holes cut in the box so it can breathe."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Nan. "What will you do next? Now you drop that box and come along!" she ordered. "Mother, make Freddie come along so we won't be late and make him let the kitten alone!"

"Oh, all right!" agreed Freddie, when he found he could not squirm loose from Bert's grasp. "I'll let her go. But I should think she'd like to go to a picnic same as we do."

"You don't seem to like it very much by the way you hang back," declared Nan. "Now hurry!"

So Freddie gave up his plan, tossing the ventilated shoe box on the table and hurrying along with Bert's hand still grasping his coat collar.

"I'm not taking any chances!" Bert said to Nan, with a laugh. "If I let him go he'll think of something else to do."

"I'm not making any trouble, am I?" asked Flossie, with a virtuous air, as she hurried along beside Nan. Now and then Flossie would smooth down her newly ironed dress, for the Bobbsey girls were attired, if not exactly in their best, in very pretty dresses for this holiday in the woods, while the boys had on fresh blouses and trousers. "Ain't I good, Nan?" asked Flossie.

"Sure, you are!" answered Bert.

"I didn't chase any pussy to put her in a shoe box, did I?"

"No, indeed! You're a nice little girl," said Nan, less anxious now that the start for the picnic had been made.

By this time the Bobbsey twins were out

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in the front yard of their home and fairly on their way to the meeting place at the church. From there several big auto busses would start, carrying the crowd to the picnic grove.

"Be good children now!" called Mrs. Bobbsey to her four, as she waved a hand to them from the front porch.

"Oh, isn't mother coming?" asked Flossie, in some dismay.

"I'll go back and get her!" offered Freddie, but Bert again caught his small brother just in time and held him.

"No more going back!" declared Bert.

"Yes, I'm coming," announced Mrs. Bobbsey, with a smile. "Some of the ladies and I are going to drive over later. Hurry along now, and don't be late!"

"We would be, only for me," announced Nan, who seemed to have all the anxiety of the picnic on her small shoulders. "I thought you'd never come along, Freddie!"

"That kittie was hard to catch," he answered. "Don't forget to come, Mother!" he called, turning to wave his hand.

Along the street of Lakeport hurried the

Bobbsey twins, and they were soon within sight of the meeting place. Several big autos stood waiting, and some were already filled.

"Oh, I hope there's room for us!" murmured Nan.

"Course there is!" declared Bert. "Didn't the minister say there would be?"

"But we're so late!" ejaculated Nan.

However, when she reached the little square in front of the church Nan saw that there were several autos with plenty of room in them, and she hastened toward one in which she saw Grace Lavine, Nellie Parks and Helen Porter, three of her most intimate girl friends.

"I'm not going in there with all those girls!" cried Freddie, for Nan was holding his hand and Flossie's and dragging them toward this particular car. "I'm not going!"

"Let him come with me," proposed Bert. "I'll take him in with John Marsh and Charlie Mason." In the auto next to the one for which Nan was headed Bert saw several of his chums.

"I'll go with Bert, but not with you!" announced Freddie, pulling away from Nan.

"All right!" she agreed. "Take good care of him—I'll look after Flossie," Nan said to Bert.

"Yes, I will," Bert promised. "Hey, fellows!" he called to his chums, who were waving their hands to him out of the windows, "we'll have a dandy ball game! I brought my bat!"

"I have a ball!" announced Sammie Todd, producing it and tossing it in the air. "Hey, look out!" he cried a moment later, for some one bumped him and Sammie missed catching the ball which went out of the auto window to the ground.

"I'll get it!" cried Freddie, eagerly, and he did, tossing it in so that Danny Rugg caught it. "I can play ball!" exclaimed Freddie.

"Sure, you can!" agreed John Marsh. "Climb in, Bert," he added.

Other children were constantly arriving from all over town and the busses were fast filling. Men and women members of the committee in charge of the picnic were hurrying here and there to see that no one was left behind.

Bert helped Freddie up into the bus with

his boy chums and then scrambled up himself. He saw Nan and Flossie getting into the bus ahead, which was filled with girls.

"Fine day for a picnic," remarked Sammie Todd. "And that's a fine necktie you have on, Bert!" As he spoke Sammie, who was generally full of mischief, leaned over from his seat and yanked Bert's tie, pulling it out of shape.

"Hey, quit that!" yelled Bert, swinging back to get out of Sammie's reach.

As he did so the bus started off, for it was now filled, and the driver wanted to let the auto behind him pull into place.

"Look out what you're doing!" yelled a voice behind Bert—an angry voice it seemed. "There! Look! You threw my cap out of the window! Now you've got to pick it up!"

Bert turned to behold the angry face of Joe Norton staring at him. Joe was rather a quarrelsome boy at times.

"I didn't throw your cap out!" answered Bert.

"Yes, you did!" insisted Joe. "And you have to get out and pick it up or I'll make you!"

Rising, he stood over Bert, who was still seated, and Joe doubled up his fists.

"There's going to be a fight!" yelled some of the boys, and they seemed rather glad of it.

"You get my cap!" snarled Joe.

"No!" firmly replied Bert. "I didn't throw your cap out and I'm not going to pick it up!"

CHAPTER II

IN THE WOODS

THIS was not the first time that Bert Bobbsey and Joe Norton had quarreled. Once or twice they had come almost to the point of fighting. Not that Bert was anxious to do this, but no boy wants to be called a coward and back out of a fight when he knows he is in the right.

And now Bert knew that he was in the right, for he was sure he had not tossed Joe's cap out of the bus window to the ground. But Joe was sometimes ready to fight or quarrel with the least excuse, and now he seemed to think he had one.

"Are you going to get out and pick up my cap?" he demanded of Bert, who had now risen so that the two boys stood in the middle of the picnic auto stage, facing one another.

"No, I'm not!" Bert answered firmly.

"And there's no need of your asking me again! I didn't throw your cap out!"

"I say you did!" snapped Joe, and he clenched his fists more tightly and drew back his arm as if to strike Bert.

"Oh! Oh!" shrieked Freddie Bobbsey, who did not want to see his brother get hurt. Joe was bigger and stronger than Bert.

Just then the bus driver, having moved his car far enough along the street for the bus behind him to come up for a full load, looked back, having heard the angry voices. He stopped his machine and called:

"What's the matter in there, boys?"

"Bert Bobbsey chucked my cap out the window and I'm going to make him pick it up!" cried Joe. "If he doesn't I'll punch him!"

"No, you won't! And I didn't chuck your cap out!" declared Bert.

"Guess I'd better take a hand in this," said the bus driver, as he crawled back among the now excited boys. Bert and Joe were still facing each other. No blows had been struck yet.

While the driver is preparing to settle the

silly little quarrel just a moment will be taken to let new readers know who the Bobbsey twins are and all about them.

There were two sets, or pairs, of twins. Bert and Nan were the older, and looked a good deal alike, except, of course, Bert was a boy and Nan was a girl. They each had dark brown hair and brown eyes.

Flossie and Freddie were the younger twins, and they were a striking contrast to Nan and Bert. For Flossie and Freddie had light, curling hair and blue eyes.

Both pairs of twins lived with their father and mother in the eastern city of Lakeport, on Lake Metoka, where Mr. Bobbsey owned a lumber yard.

In the first book of this series, called "The Bobbsey Twins," were told some of the earliest adventures of Bert and Nan, as well as what happened to Flossie and Freddie. Most of the adventures in that book took place around the home of the twins.

Later on Bert, his sisters and brother went to the country and to the seashore. They had fun in school and at Snow Lodge, as well as at Cloverbank and other places.

The book just before the one you are now reading is called "The Bobbsey Twins at Cherry Corners," and has to do with a strange mystery about a circus train and a mischievous boy.

After their return from Cherry Corners the Bobbsey twins had many good times at home and in school, and now it is summer again and they are ready for more adventures.

Just before this story opens Mrs. Bobbsey and some of the ladies in the church had arranged for the yearly picnic in Oak Grove, a patch of woods near a little river about ten miles from Lakeport.

Bert, Nan, and the smaller twins were delighted when they heard about the picnic and made great preparations for it. And at last, as you have seen, they got started. Though now, because of what had happened about Joe's cap, it looked as if Bert's part in the picnic was to be spoiled.

"What's this all about?" asked Tim Tracy, the bus driver, as he crawled back amid the boys.

"I told you!" snapped Joe. "Bert chucked my hat out of the window!"

"I say I didn't!" angrily retorted Bert. He felt that he had a right to be a bit angry, for he knew that Joe was not telling the truth, though Joe might have thought he was.

"If he doesn't pick up my cap I'm going to punch him!" went on the quarrelsome lad.

"Why don't you do it then?" cried Bert. "You've been saying you would half a dozen times! Go on! I dare you to!"

"Now, now!" exclaimed Mr. Tracy in kindly tones, "there's going to be no fighting in my bus, especially on a church picnic! I'm ashamed of you boys! That's what I am—ashamed of you!"

"Well, I didn't start it!" said Bert.

"You did so!" snapped Joe.

"Let me hear the right of this now!" urged the driver. "Who threw that ball in the first place?"

"I did," admitted Sammie Todd. "It went out the window."

"And I threw it back in!" chimed in Freddie eagerly.

"That's what you did, Little Fireman!" said the driver, for that was Freddie's pet name, given him by his father because, when

a smaller chap, Freddie was so fond of a toy fire engine he got one Christmas. "Yes, I looked back and saw you throw the ball in," went on the driver. "But who caught it?"

"I did," answered Danny Rugg.

"Then what happened?" asked Mr. Tracy.

"Then Sam Todd pulled my necktie," Bert answered.

"And Bert dodged back and he bumped up against Joe who was right behind him," reported Sam. "That's how Joe's cap got knocked off. It was when Bert bumped into him. Bert didn't throw the cap out at all. It just fell off Joe's head when he leaned over to get out of Bert's way."

"Well, why didn't you say this at first and not have all this fuss?" asked the bus driver. "Land sakes!"

"I—I sort of forgot about it," Sam answered. "But that's how it happened."

"Did it?" asked the driver, turning to Joe. "Did you jerk your head when Bert bumped against you?"

"I guess maybe I did," was the slowly given answer. "All I know is my cap went

out of the window and I thought Bert threw it."

"I knew I didn't," declared Bert." "I'm not going to pick it up, either," he added defiantly.

"Sam, it was your fault—while pulling Bert's tie and making him joggle Joe—that the cap fell off," decided Mr. Tracy. "So you'll have to pick it up. That's only fair!"

"That's right! That's fair! Sam must pick up Joe's cap!" exclaimed several other boys, and, feeling that he was in the wrong, Sam got down and restored the cap to his chum.

"Now don't have any more fusses," went on the driver, climbing back to his seat. "This is a church picnic and it's too nice a day to have quarrels. Be nice, now, boys!"

As the driver had said, it was a beautiful day and thinking of the fun they were going to have in the picnic grove, and remembering the bountiful lunch prepared for them, most of the boys smiled. The angry looks faded from the faces of Bert and Joe and they smiled also.

"That's better!" chuckled the driver. "Now then we'll get started and be the first ones there!"

"Hurrray!" cried Freddie. "But I wish I had the little pussy. She never was on a picnic," he added.

The bus containing Bert and his chums was the first to get under way, for it was the first to be fully loaded and the men in charge of the picnic wanted to get the streets around the church cleared of the crowd as soon as possible.

"Think we can get up a ball game, Bert?" asked Danny Rugg, as the bus rolled along.

"Sure," was the answer. "Maybe not enough for nine on a side; but we can have some fun, anyhow."

"We ought to have a nine at school," said Joe Norton. "Lots of schools around here have nines. Why don't we have one?" He and Bert had now forgotten their quarrel.

"It's a good idea," decided Bert. "But we haven't got anybody who can pitch."

"We have a good catcher—you're good at that, Bert," said Charlie Mason.

"I might pitch if you wanted me to," of-

ferred Joe, smiling in a friendly way at Bert. "When I was out at my cousin's a few weeks ago, he showed me how to pitch a curve."

"Did he?" asked Bert eagerly. "That's fine! That's what we need—a good pitcher. We'll get up a baseball nine next week."

The boys began to talk eagerly of this, and almost before they knew it they had reached the picnic grounds, followed, soon afterward, by other stages. That containing Nan and Flossie was the second to reach the woods, and the children leaped out with merry shouts and laughter.

"Is Freddie all right, Bert?" asked Nan as she saw her older brother, carrying his bat, descend from the bus.

"Sure, he's all right!" was the answer.

"Bert almost had a fight!" Freddie reported, as he scrambled down.

"Now never mind about that!" cautioned Bert. "Don't be telling tales out of school! Keep quiet about it."

However, Nan had heard, and she was just going to question her brother about it when there was a commotion in the bus from which she had just alighted and where she had left

Flossie in charge of Grace Lavine for a moment while she hastened over to see if Freddie was safe. Nan felt that she was responsible for her small brother and sister.

So it happened that, just as Nan was going to ask further about the quarrel Freddie had mentioned, her attention was distracted to the other bus.

"Oh! Oh!" cried a voice she recognized as Flossie's. "Oh, dear!"

There was a crowd around the bus now, for most of the girls had gotten out.

"What is it? What's the matter?" exclaimed Nan, running toward it.

"Oh, Arabella Jones fell out! Arabella Jones fell out!" wailed Flossie.

"More trouble!" cried Bert, as he hastened after Nan, who was now running to where Flossie was wailing so sadly.

CHAPTER III

FREDDIE'S FISH

"WHAT is the matter, Flossie?" asked Nan as she reached the auto stage and saw her small sister and a few other girls still inside.

"Arabella Jones fell out!" wailed Freddie's twin sister. "Oh, it's too bad! Arabella Jones fell out!"

Nan, with a quick look around the auto, saw no child lying on the ground and none who seemed to have just gotten up after a fall. So Nan said:

"Don't be silly, Flossie! Nobody has fallen out of the bus!"

"That's what I told her!" said another girl.

"Of course not!" went on Nan. "I was with you until just a moment ago, when I got out, and no little girl fell. What do you mean, Flossie, by saying such a thing?"

"I didn't say any little *girl* fell out!" answered Flossie, not crying so hard now.

"Who is Arabella Jones if she isn't a little girl?" asked Nan. She did not know any playmate of her sister who bore this name, but then, she thought, Flossie might have become acquainted with some new girl on the way to the picnic.

"Arabella Jones isn't a little *girl*," stated Flossie. "She's my *doll* and she fell out of the stage and maybe she's run over! Oh, dear!"

"Oh—a *doll*—Arabella Jones a *doll*!" murmured Grace Lavine. "And I thought Flossie meant a little girl."

"So did I," added Nellie Parks.

Then up spoke Nan, saying:

"Look here, Flossie Bobbsey! what do you mean by this? You haven't any doll named Arabella Jones!" Nan knew that Flossie gave names to all her dolls, just as Nan had done when she was Flossie's age. And there was no Arabella Jones in Flossie's small family.

"Yes, I have a doll named Arabella Jones!" insisted Flossie. "I gave her that name when

she was riding with me in the stage. It was my doll that used to be named Rosalie Smith, but I didn't like that name so I changed it to Arabella Jones, and she fell out! Oh, dear!"

Flossie was crying again.

"Oh! Rosalie Smith!" exclaimed Nan. She knew that Flossie had a doll with that name.

"She isn't Rosalie Smith any more, she's Arabella Jones, and I want her!" wailed Flossie. "I want her back."

Several others among the smaller girls had their dolls with them, as Nan could see, and she knew Flossie had carried one when starting out. She did not know what to do to console her weeping sister over the loss of Arabella Jones when suddenly a boy came running up toward the stage calling:

"Whose doll is this? I just found it down the road!"

"Oh, that's mine! That's Arabella Jones!" cried Flossie, smiling through her tears as she recognized her "child." She hurried down out of the stage and was soon clasping Arabella in her arms, much to Nan's relief.

"You had better take better care of Ara-

bella, Flossie," Nan said to her small sister while some of the other girls smiled as Flossie walked away with her own particular chums, each one carrying a doll.

"I did take good care of her," Flossie replied. "But when the auto went over a bump Arabella must have jiggled out of my lap and I didn't know it. And when I couldn't find her I thought she fell out and maybe got runned over. I'm glad she didn't!"

By this time nearly all the other auto stages had reached Oak Grove and the boys and girls scrambled out, eager to play. Some of the ladies and gentlemen of the church committee in charge were on hand to see that every one was looked after and that none got into danger. On the last stage to arrive came Mrs. Bobbsey with the mothers of Grace, Nellie, and some of the other girls with whom Nan played.

Bert, who was talking to some of his chums, hurried over to his mother to ask:

"When are we going to eat and where will it be?"

"Oh, Bert! You had breakfast only a

little while ago!" exclaimed his mother, with a laugh in which the other ladies joined.

"Well, I can't help it—I'm hungry!" Bert said. "When shall we eat and where will it be?"

"Dinner will be served at noon," said Mrs. Parks, who was on the "refreshment committee," as it was called.

"And the tables will be set over there," added Mrs. Lavine, pointing to where several men were laying boards across carpenters' sawhorses.

"Don't forget the time and the place, fellows!" called Bert to his chums, as he turned away. "See you later, Mocher!"

"Where are you going?" she asked him.

"To play ball!"

"I'm coming, too!" insisted Freddie. "I throwed a ball up in the stage; didn't I Bert?" he asked.

"Sure, you did!" answered Danny Rugg. "You can be our side's mascot, Freddie. Come along!"

Eager and excited, the smaller boy ran along with the older ones. Bert and his chums were anxious to start the baseball.

game, for there was a good field for playing near the picnic grounds. Bert wanted to show what he could do with a bat and, for a small boy, he was considered good at hitting. More than once, in playing little games near his house, he had knocked home runs. Of course the ball field on which Bert and his schoolmates played was not as large as the one the regular teams play on.

"I want to practice my pitching a little before we start the game," said Joe Norton.

"I'll catch for you. I brought a big glove," offered Bert. The quarrel between him and Joe was forgotten now.

In addition to being a good batter, Bert Bobbsey was also a good catcher behind the home plate. Perhaps he had gained this position because he was the owner of the best catching glove of any of the small boys. Bert had received a fine catching glove at Christmas and lost no chance to practice with it. Sometimes, when he could get no other boys to help him in practice, he would call on Nan, begging her to "sting them in," and Nan would throw as hard as she could, Bert catching them each time.

While Charlie Mason and John Marsh went among the boys, getting up the two teams so that a game could be played, Bert and Joe, going off to one side, practiced pitching and catching.

"You are a good pitcher!" Bert told Joe. "You have a good curve!"

"Yes, my cousin showed me how to do it," Joe answered.

"Then we can get up a good nine in our school, and you can be pitcher and I'll be catcher," went on Bert. "That's what we need most—a good pitcher to curve the ball to fool the other side. Ho, that was a peach, Joe!"

"Glad you liked it. Now here's another!"

After a while Charlie and John announced that they had two teams organized, one of them being captain of each. At first Bert had thought perhaps he might be captain of one side and Joe Norton of the other, but when Bert found what a good pitcher Joe was, the Bobbsey lad wanted Joe on his own side.

So it was arranged, and while the girls were playing hopscotch and tag and, some of them,

archery and while the fathers and mothers were setting the dinner tables, the ball game started.

At first, in spite of Joe's clever pitching and Bert's catching, and even though Bert knocked several long flies, the other side, of which Charlie Mason was captain, got ahead. Then Bert said to his chums:

"Fellows, we must play harder! We have to beat!"

"Sure, we have to beat!" declared Captain Marsh.

"I'll strike out more men!" decided Joe.

When the next inning started there was a change for the better on Bert's side. He caught two fouls behind the bat and Joe struck out another boy, so the side got no runs. When Bert's turn to bat came he knocked a home run with two on base, bringing in three tallies, which put his side ahead.

Then the dinner bell rang suddenly, and half the team on each side stopped playing and made a rush for the tables.

"Here! Come back and finish the game!" demanded Charlie.

"Don't go yet!" begged Bert.

"We'll finish the game after we eat!" chorused several boys, amid laughter.

"I guess that will be the best way," decided Joe, with a chuckle.

"Anyhow we're ahead!" said Bert. "I can eat a lot now!"

A little later the Bobbsey twins and their schoolmates were gathered about the tables and being helped to sandwiches, chicken, cake and other good things that Mrs. Bobbsey and her ladies of the refreshment committee had provided.

"I'm glad I came on this picnic," remarked Freddie.

"So'm I!" agreed Flossie. "Arabella Jones is glad, too!" and she pretended to feed her newly named doll a bit of chocolate cake.

Of course a few ants crawled into the butter and more than one fly fell into the milk pitcher and several caterpillars crawled over the cloth. But these things always happen at picnics, so no one minded.

After the lunch Bert and some of the other boys most interested in baseball, wanted to start the game again. But Sammie Todd, who was rather fat, objected, saying:

"It's best to rest after you eat!"

"That's right," agreed Danny Rugg. "We might get sunstruck if we played too soon after eating."

Some of the other boys felt it would be just as well to wait a while, and though Bert was anxious to knock more home runs and though Joe wanted to show what he could do in the way of pitching, there were so many others who wanted to wait that this was decided on.

"Well," said Freddie Bobbsey to Flossie, as he heard this talk, "if I can't be a mascot I'm going to do something else."

"What's a mascot?" asked Flossie, who was getting her doll to sleep as she and Freddie sat under a shady tree near where Bert and some other boys were resting.

"A mascot is somebody that brings good luck to a baseball nine," Freddie answered. "And I brought good luck to Bert 'cause he knocked a home run. But if I can't be a mascot I'm going to do something else."

"What are you going to do?" Flossie wanted to know.

"I'm going to fish," Freddie answered. "I'm going to catch a fish!"

"Then Arabella and I will come and watch you," decided Flossie. "I mean I'll watch you. Arabella can't, 'cause she's asleep now. But fishes are not noisy and they won't wake Arabella up; will they?"

"No, I guess they won't," Freddie answered.

"But you haven't got anything to fish with," objected Flossie. "No pole, no line, nothing."

"I've a string in my pocket," returned her brother, "and I can get a stick in the woods for a pole. If you had a pin I could bend it up for a hook. Have you a pin?" he asked, as he took a tangle of string from his pocket.

"I guess maybe there's one in Arabella's dress," said Flossie in a whisper. "I'll get it out without waking her up." This she did, very carefully, hardly moving the sleeping doll at all.

With a stick for a pole and tying on it the string to which he fastened the bent pin hook, Freddie went to the stream that flowed along one edge of the picnic grove. Flossie went with him, leaving her doll asleep under a pile of green leaves.

For bait Freddie put on the pin hook a piece of meat from part of a chicken sandwich he had saved from his lunch, and he was soon patiently waiting on the bank of the brook for a bite.

"Maybe the fishes are all asleep and you can't catch any," said Flossie, after several minutes had passed and nothing had happened.

"Hush! Don't talk. I think I got a bite just now!" whispered her brother as he leaned far over the edge.

Something seemed twitching and jiggling his line. He and Flossie looked eagerly down toward the water.

Then Freddie began to slip on the grass. He tried to hold himself back, but could not.

"Oh! Oh!" he cried. "I'm going to fall in!"

That is exactly what Freddie Bobbsey did! He fell into the brook!

CHAPTER IV

THE GREEN SNAKE

FOR a moment or two after her brother's fall into the brook, Flossie Bobbsey did not know what to do. She just sat on the grassy bank, watching Freddie splashing about in the water and listening to him yell. Oh, yes, Freddie yelled. You may be sure of that.

Then Flossie knew she must do something to help. At first she had an idea that she might jump in and pull Freddie out. But she was not a very good swimmer and, besides, she was a little afraid of getting in the water, especially with her clothes on. She heard Freddie, between his cries of alarm, shouting:

"Mother! Bert! Get me out! Get me out!"

That gave Flossie an idea. She would run

and call her mother, Bert, or some of the bigger boys.

"Don't be afraid, Freddie!" she said to her floundering brother. "I'll go and get somebody to save you!"

Away sped Flossie over the meadow toward the grove whence came the talk, shouts, and laughter of the picnic crowd. The ball game was about to start again when Bert and his chums were surprised by seeing Flossie, with flying hair and widely opened eyes, rushing toward them crying:

"Freddie fell in! Freddie fell in when he was catching a fish!"

"What did he fall into?" asked Danny Rugg, not knowing whether Flossie was fooling or was in earnest.

"He fell into the brook! Oh, Freddie fell into the brook and he's there now!" gasped Flossie.

In an instant Bert understood, and, dropping his bat, he made a rush toward the stream of water in the direction he had seen Freddie take a little while before. After Bert ran Joe, John, Charlie, Sam and several others of the ball teams.

Luckily for Freddie, the water where he had fallen in was not deep, and, after splashing about a bit, getting some in his mouth and up his nose, he managed to stand on his feet and found he was only in up to his waist. So he was in no danger of drowning.

But his heart was beating fast from fright and of course he was wet through, for he had fallen in head first. Also, it was no easy matter for him to scramble up the muddy, slippery bank, try as he did.

It was thus that Bert and the other boys found Freddie when they reached the brook, half out of breath with their run. Freddie was trying to climb up, but he slipped back just as often. He had not thought of wading along to a place where the bank was not so steep and slippery.

"Give me your hands, Freddie," called Bert, leaning down to reach his small brother. "I'll pull you out."

"Let me take one hand!" said Joe Norton.

"Oh, Bert! I'm—I'm—now—I'm all wet!" stammered Freddie.

"Of course you are, but that won't hurt you!" replied Bert, ready to smile now that

he saw his little brother was in no real danger. "But you'll soon dry out. Give us your hands."

With Bert and Joe to pull him up the slippery bank, Freddie was soon out of the stream and, though water dripped and ran off him from every point, he was not much the worse for his sudden bath.

"Oh, Freddie, are you all right?" faltered Flossie, who, now that any danger was past, began to cry.

"Sure, he's all right!" said Joe, with a laugh. "It isn't a real picnic unless somebody falls into the brook, and Freddie Bobbsey did it."

"You didn't catch the fish, did you?" asked Flossie, looking for a sight of the pole and line.

"No, it got away," Freddie sadly replied. "My pole is gone, too! But I can get another!" he added more cheerfully.

"No you don't—not to-day!" decided Bert. "You've had enough of fishing. Here comes mother!"

Mrs. Bobbsey, who had heard, as had several other ladies, the alarm raised by Flossie,

had hurried to the brook, and soon Freddie's mother had taken charge of him.

"Poor little fellow!" murmured Mrs. Lavine.

"Oh, he'll be all right as soon as I dry him out," said Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Then please hurry and dry me," begged Freddie, "'cause I have to be Bert's home run mascot!"

But the ball game was over for good, with Bert's side winners, by the time Freddie's clothes, some of which were taken off him, were dry again.

It was while Freddie was being kept near his mother and some of the other ladies, the little fellow being clad only in his undergarments during the time his blouse and knickers were drying, that a curious adventure happened to Bert and Nan. It began when Flossie lost her doll, Arabella Jones.

After Flossie had run back from the brook, to give the alarm about Freddie, the small twin forgot for a time that she had put her doll to sleep under a coverlet of leaves while she made sure that her brother was all right. It was not until the ball game was over and

some of the boys had gone to another part of the grove to seek new fun, that Flossie remembered Arabella.

"Oh, Nan, I've lost Arabella!" she exclaimed to her sister, who was resting under a tree after a fast game of Puss-Wants-a-Corner, having used trees for corners.

"That doll has a lot of bad luck," said Nan. "I think you had better change her name again. First she falls out of the bus and now she is lost. She was better as Rosalie Smith."

"No, I like Arabella better," insisted Flossie. "But she's lost. Oh, dear!"

Seeing how bad her little sister felt, Nan could do no less than help find the missing doll, so she ask Flossie about her lost "child."

"I put her to sleep under some leaves when I went to help Freddie catch a fish, but I can't remember where it was," Flossie reported. "I know, though, it was near a tree."

"Try to think," urged Nan.

"I am trying to think," said Flossie.

"What kind of tree was it?" asked Nan.

"It was—now—it was a—a green tree!" exclaimed Flossie.

"Oh, you dear, silly, little goose!" cried

Nan. "All the trees in this picnic grove are green, and one is like the other. Can't you tell me any better than that?"

Flossie sadly shook her head.

"All I know is that it was a green tree, and it was a big, shady tree," she said.

This did not help Nan much in showing her where to begin looking for the lost doll, since many trees in the grove were large and shady.

"Think hard, Flossie," Nan urged.

Flossie shut her eyes and wrinkled up her small nose and then she announced:

"It was close to where Freddie went fishing and fell in, 'cause we didn't have to walk far after I put Arabella to sleep before we got to the brook."

"That's better," Nan said. "I'll get Bert and we'll have a look."

Bert had worked hard to bring his little baseball team in a winner by catching many balls behind the bat and also by knocking two home runs. So now, after the game, he was having a little rest off by himself under an oak tree. He was lying there, half asleep, when Nan and Flossie came up to him.

"Bert!" called Nan

"What's the matter—time to eat again?" he asked, slowly opening his eyes.

"Flossie has lost her doll," explained Nan. "Will you please come and help us look for her?"

Bert was a kind brother and he wanted to help Flossie. So up he jumped and, after listening to Flossie's tale of where she had put Arabella to sleep not far from the brook at the place where Freddie fell in, Bert said:

"I guess we can find Arabella all right!"

"Oh, I'm so glad!" cried Flossie, clapping her hands.

"The first thing to do," said Bert, "is to go to the place where we got Freddie out and then walk from there toward the woods. Maybe we can see the marks where Freddie and Flossie walked after Flossie put her doll to sleep under the leaves."

"I guess that would be a good way," agreed Nan.

Followed by his sisters, Bert started through a part of the grove where just then there were no others of the picnic crowd. It was well away from the lunch tables and the baseball field and was rather lonely.

Suddenly, as Nan was walking along, she gave a scream and clutched Flossie by the arm, pulling her back to one side of the path.

"Oh! Look out!" yelled Nan.

"What's the matter?" asked Bert, turning back, for he had walked on ahead.

"Snakes!" cried Nan, putting her arms about her small sister. "A lot of green snakes! Oh, I'm going to run!"

Bert, with a couple of jumps, was back beside his sisters before Nan had a chance to run.

"Show me the snakes!" he said.

"There! Look!"

Nan pointed to a little hollow under some thick bushes.

"I don't see anything," stated Bert.

"Well, they were right there—I saw them—green snakes—a lot of them!" insisted Nan. "And they hissed at me!"

"I guess it was a green vine," said Bert, with a laugh.

But a second later another scream came from Nan, and Flossie also cried out.

"There!" yelled Nan, grabbing Bert's arm

and pointing with her other hand. "See it—the green snake!"

Bert looked and felt a little thrill go over him as he saw, crawling from beneath the bush, a green snake!

"Bert! Bert!" gasped Nan as she clasped her little sister more tightly in her arms, almost lifting her off the ground. "Oh, Bert! Don't let the snakes get us!"

CHAPTER V

A STRANGE BOY

"SNAKES!" cried Bert, who, having been more in the woods than Nan, was not as frightened at the sight of one as she was. As for Flossie, she was more alarmed by Nan's actions than by the snake. "Snakes!" exclaimed Bert a second time. "I see only one!"

"There are two!" cried Nan and as she spoke her brother noticed a second green snake crawling out of the bushes. "Oh, aren't they terrible!" gasped Nan. She was almost afraid to pick up Flossie and run away because she thought she might meet other serpents in the bushes on either side of the path.

"I'll fix those snakes!" cried Bert.

He looked around for a stone and, having found one, was about to throw it at the larger

snake, which was gliding slowly along, when the bushes suddenly parted and a strange boy stepped into view. He was a boy whose face was so tanned as to be almost as dark as that of a colored person. He was darker than any Italians Bert had seen.

The strange boy, after breaking through the bushes, stood for a moment on the edge of the path close to the wriggling green serpents.

"Oh, look out! Be careful!" gasped Nan, pausing in her start to run away with Flossie.

"What's the matter? Look out for what?" asked the strange boy.

"Those snakes my sister means!" explained Bert. "I'm going to smash them with this rock," and he raised it above his head while, with his other hand, he pointed to the larger serpent. The smaller one had glided out of sight.

"Hold on! Wait! Don't kill that snake!" suddenly cried the newcomer, raising a hand in warning. "Don't throw that rock!"

"Why not?" Bert wanted to know. "Is it your snake?"

"No, it isn't mine," answered the boy,

with a smile that showed his white teeth in strange contrast to his dark face. "But it is a harmless snake. It wouldn't hurt you."

"Wouldn't it bite?" asked Nan.

"Not you," said the boy. "It might catch a toad or a frog if it was hungry. But it will be only too glad to go away from you if you will let it. See, it is going away now."

As he spoke and pointed, the snake began gliding away faster, its head raised above the ground and its forked tongue shooting in and out rapidly.

"Oh!" cried Nan, as she let Flossie slip to the ground, for now there seemed to be no danger. "I can't bear snakes!"

"This kind will never hurt anybody," said the strange boy with another friendly smile. "They're only too glad to hide away."

"Look at its stinger going in and out!" said Bert. "Can't they hurt you with that?"

"Not at all," answered the other boy. "A snake's tongue is only for tasting or feeling with, same as our tongues are. Some snakes bite and poison you, and others, that are very big, squeeze you to death, but no snake

ever stings with its tongue. They can't. These green snakes are too small to squeeze anything bigger than a toad or a frog, and they aren't poisonous, even if they should bite you. So you don't need to be afraid of them. They do more good than they do harm, for they catch rats and mice that eat the farmers' grain."

"Well, I'm not afraid now that the snake is gone," said Nan. "But I don't like them."

"I wasn't afraid," stated Bert. "I was going to smash that snake with this rock if you hadn't come along. How do you know so much about snakes?"

"Oh, I learned," the boy answered modestly. "I've lived in the woods a long time, and you learn things that way."

"Do you live in these woods?" asked Bert. He had, almost as soon as he saw the strange boy, been sure that the newcomer did not live in Lakeport. Nor was the boy one who had come on the picnic.

"Yes, my sister and I live in a cabin not far from here," said the boy.

"We live in Lakeport," explained Bert. "Our names are Bobbsey."

"We're twins," added Nan.

"I could see that," said the boy.

"I'm a twin too, but my twin brother Freddie fell into the brook and they had to hang him up to dry!" broke in Flossie.

"Did they hang your little brother up to dry?" asked the boy who knew so much about snakes. He was laughing now.

"Oh, no! I mean his clothes!" and Flossie laughed.

"That's more like it," replied the dark-skinned lad. "My sister and I saw your picnic," he added. "You seemed to be having a lot of fun."

"We did have," stated Bert. "Had a ball game, too. Is your cabin near here?"

"Not far away. My name is Jimmy Bigfish and my sister is named Sunshine."

"Sunshine!" exclaimed Nan. "What a pretty name!"

"She doesn't think her other name is so pretty," said Jimmy.

"You mean Bigfish?" asked Bert.

"Yes. But it's our name, so we have to keep it."

"'Tis rather a queer name," agreed Bert.

since Jimmy had mentioned it first. As Bert and Nan looked closely at the stranger they could see that he was different from any boy whom they had ever known.

"Some folks think Bobbsey is a queer name," went on Nan, for she did not want it to seem that she and her brother were making fun of Jimmy Bigfish. "Sometimes the girls at school call me Bobsled to tease me," and Nan smiled.

"Well, Bobsled wouldn't be such a queer name as Bigfish," said Jimmy. "Though my sister Sunshine and I don't think as much about it as we did at first."

"How did your sister come to be called Sunshine?" Nan wanted to know. Flossie was busy peering here and there in the bushes for another sight of the snakes. Not that she really wanted to see the green serpents, but, as she remarked afterward, she wanted to be sure they had gone.

"My father gave her that name," answered Jimmy Bigfish.

"Does your father live in the cabin with you?" Bert inquired.

Jimmy shook his head and there was some-

thing about him that made Bert sure he had touched on a tender subject. He found out a moment later that this was true when the dark-skinned boy said in a low voice:

"My father is dead. My sister and I live with my mother's sister. She's our aunt, but her name isn't queer like ours."

"What is it?" asked Nan.

"My aunt's name is Mrs. Carwith," Jimmy Bigfish said.

"We have a car!" broke in Flossie. "But we didn't ride in it to this picnic. We came in a big auto stage and I lost Arabella Jones."

"Is Arabella Jones your sister? Oh, no she couldn't be. Her name would have to be Bobbsey, like yours," said Jimmy, with a smile.

"Arabella Jones is my best doll," stated Flossie. "And she's lost again. Why don't you find her, Nan?"

"That's what we came here for," explained Bert. "My little sister and my brother, Freddie, went fishing. Flossie put her doll to sleep under a tree with some leaves over it and when Freddie fell in Flossie was so excited she couldn't remember where she left her doll."

"So Bert and I came out here to help her look," added Nan. "We were going to start from the place where Freddie fell in and then, all of a sudden, I saw those terrible green snakes and——"

Nan looked about as if afraid she might see more of them.

"You never need worry about those snakes, or about any kind in these woods!" replied Jimmy Bigfish, comfortingly. "But maybe I can help you find the doll," he added. "I'm pretty good at getting around in the woods."

Nan and Bert looked wonderingly at each other. They were beginning to think more and more that Jimmy Bigfish was a very strange lad indeed. Though they were beginning to like him.

"If you'll show me where the little boy fell in and if the little girl can point out the way she and her brother took after the doll was put to sleep, maybe I can find it," Jimmy went on.

It did not take long to reach the scene of Freddie's accident. Then, urged by Nan and Bert, Flossie pointed out, as best she could, the way she and her brother had taken

Jimmy Bigfish began to look carefully along the ground. He saw several footprints of small feet which he pointed out to Bert and Nan, and the Bobbsey twins were thinking how clever he was when, suddenly, Jimmy walked toward a tree, pointed to a little pile of leaves beneath the shady branches, and said:

"I think you will find the doll there!"

"Oh, yes! That's just where I left Arabella Jones!" cried Flossie, in delight. "I'm so glad!"

She was about to rush forward when Nan caught her sister by the arm, holding her back.

"Wait a moment, Flossie!" cried Nan. "There's something moving in those leaves that are over your doll. Maybe there's another green snake there and we'd better let it crawl away before you pick up Arabella Jones."

"Oh, is the snake going to eat my doll?" cried Flossie, while the others looked curiously toward the moving leaves.

CHAPTER VI

THE WINDOW FACE

JIMMY BIGFISH laughed as he kept on toward the pile of leaves under which Flossie was sure she had left Arabella Jones. While even Bert hung back a moment, somewhat in fear of snakes, the dark-faced lad went right up to the leaves and, leaning over, picked up Flossie's doll.

"Is this yours?" he called to the little girl.

"Oh, yes!" she answered eagerly. "Did the snake bite her?"

"There wasn't any snake," Jimmy replied. "It was just the wind rustling the leaves. Snakes want to keep out of the way. They don't come around where folks are if they can help it. Well, here's your doll, little girl," and he handed Arabella to Flossie, who now hurried up to cuddle her "child."

"Thank you, Jimmy, for helping us find it," said Nan.

"That's right, we're much obliged," added Bert. "How did you know the doll was here?"

"Oh, I sort of could tell by the footprints in the grass," was the answer.

"That's more than I could do," Bert admitted. "You must be a sort of trapper or maybe a woods' scout."

"No," and Jimmy smiled. "But I've lived in the woods a lot and my father showed me how to run a trail."

"Does your sister know about snakes and things like that?" asked Nan.

"Who, Sunshine?" asked Jimmy, with a smile which again showed his clean, white teeth. "Yes, Shine, as we call her for short, knows almost as much about the woods as I do."

"Where is she now?" asked Nan, wondering whether Jimmy's sister was as odd looking as he was.

"Oh, she's back in the cabin, I guess, with my aunt," was the reply. "But maybe we won't stay there long."

"Why not?" asked Bert.

"Because my aunt talks of moving into Lakeport. She says it is time we were brought up like civilized people and sent to school. So I guess we'll soon be moving out of the woods. I'm not sure I'll like it."

"Maybe your mother will be glad to move out of the woods," observed Nan. "I know my mother often is after we have spent a summer in a camp."

"Shine and I haven't any mother or father," said Jimmy Bigfish, and his voice was sad. "We're orphans, and we live with my aunt, Mrs. Carwith, who was my mother's sister."

"Oh," murmured Nan, and she was rather sorry she had spoken about the boy's mother.

But Jimmy's sadness seemed to pass away quickly and he smiled at the Bobbsey twins as he remarked:

"Well, I guess I'll be hitting the trail. I have to go to the store for my aunt. I'll see you again, maybe," he said, nodding to Bert.

"I hope so," was the answer.

"And I like you for finding my doll," added Flossie. "If I had lost Arabella Jones I don't know what I'd do."

"Well, I'm glad you have her," said Jimmy, as he moved off through the trees, soon being lost to sight.

The three Bobbseys walked back toward the picnic grove, for it was almost time to start for home.

"Isn't he a queer boy?" asked Nan of her brother.

"Sort of," Bert admitted. "But he's real nice, I think. He knows a lot about the woods. I wish I knew as much."

"Yes," agreed Nan, "he's smart."

They walked on with Flossie, who was cuddling her doll, and when they reached the grove they found that Freddie had dried out and was dressed again. He wanted to resume his fishing as he was sure he could catch something, and when Flossie told him about the meeting with Jimmy Bigfish and the finding of the doll, her twin brother wanted to go to the cabin to see Sunshine.

"No, not now," decided Mrs. Bobbsey. "We shall soon start for home. The picnic is over."

The happy day had come to a close. It had been one filled with delight for the boys

and girls and, though Bert and Nan did not know it, the meeting with Jimmy Bigfish was to have a strange ending.

Into the auto stages the youngsters piled again and then, with merry shouts and jolly songs, the journey back to Lakeport was begun. Home was reached without accident just as dusk was falling.

"Some day I'm going to the woods again and see if I can find the cabin where Jimmy Bigfish lives," said Bert to Nan, as they went up to their rooms.

"He said they were going to move to town, and maybe he'll come to our school," suggested Nan.

"I hope he does!" exclaimed her brother. "He looks as if he'd make a dandy ball player and I want to organize a good nine. There are almost enough fellows who can play, but we need a few more."

The picnic had been held on Saturday, and the following Monday, when he reached school, Bert Bobbsey looked eagerly about for a sight of the strange boy who was not afraid of green snakes and who could find lost dolls. But Jimmy Bigfish was not around the school

yard. Then Bert met many of his school-mates, and in talking over the game at the picnic grove and planning about the new nine, Bert rather forgot the strange lad.

Once or twice that day, at the noon intermission and the recess, Bert mentioned to Charlie Mason, Danny Rugg, and Joe Norton and his other chums something about having met Jimmy. But none of the other lads knew him nor had they seen him in the woods or about the village.

"Was he an Italian?" asked Joe.

"He didn't seem to be an Italian," Bert answered. "He spoke just the same as we do."

"Maybe he was a Gypsy," suggested Sammy. "A lot of them can speak English."

"No, he didn't seem to be a Gypsy, either," objected Bert. "I don't know exactly what he was. But he knew a lot about the woods."

Then, in getting together the boys with whom he hoped to form a nine, Bert was kept so busy that, during the next few days, all thought of Jimmy Bigfish passed out of his mind.

It was the beginning of summer, but there

would be several weeks of school before the long vacation started.

"We'll have lots of time to play baseball," decided Bert.

Flossie and Freddie had fun in their own way, romping and running and playing in the dirt, Flossie taking her different dolls out for walks or rides and Freddie playing with his toys, among which was the faithful fire engine that still squirted a stream of real water when he wound up the spring of the little pump.

The smaller Bobbsey twins were very fond of their toys, and Flossie was so devoted to her dolls that something queer happened one day. She and Freddie each had a small leather school bag in which to carry their books. One day Miss Moffett, who taught the class in which Freddie and Flossie were pupils, said to Flossie:

"Where is your reading book? Take it out and I will see how well you can read now."

Flossie looked in her desk, but her book wasn't there. Then she remembered that she had not opened her little bag since coming to school. The children had to hang their bags in the cloakroom.

"Oh, Miss Moffett," said Flossie, "my reader book is in my bag in the cloakroom."

"You may get it and read the third lesson," said the teacher.

Flossie went to the cloakroom and put her hand in her bag. But, instead of taking out her book, she took out Arabella Jones! Then Flossie forgot all about school, lessons, and reading books, and, taking her doll in her arms, she sat down on a stool in the cloakroom and began singing a lullaby.

What had happened was that at home that morning, just before starting for school, Flossie had rocked her doll to sleep. Then, instead of putting Arabella in her little crib, Flossie had dropped the doll into the open school bag with the books and had taken Arabella off to school.

When Flossie took Arabella out again she just naturally forgot everything else except her play "child."

Meanwhile Miss Moffett waited for Flossie to come back to the classroom, and when a minute or two passed, and the little Bobbsey girl did not appear, the teacher thought something had happened. She hurried into the

cloakroom and there saw a sight which made her want to laugh, but she did not think it wise to do so.

There was Flossie, rocking to and fro on the stool, holding Arabella in her arms and softly singing the doll to sleep.

"Why, Flossie!" exclaimed Miss Moffett. "What are you doing? I sent you to get your reader!"

"Oh, I forgot all about it!" gasped Flossie. "I took out my doll instead. I—I guess I thought I was back home again!"

"I guess you did," said the teacher, smiling, for she saw that Flossie had intended no wrong. "Well, come to your seat now and read."

Miss Moffett did not tell the other children why Flossie had stayed so long in the cloakroom, but she mentioned it to the other teachers at recess and they had a good laugh over it.

"Those Bobbsey twins are very good children," said Miss Clark, who this term was the teacher of Nan and Bert. "Nan is one of my best pupils and she is very unselfish. For instance, this afternoon it was the turn of her brother, Bert, to stay in and clean off the

blackboards. But it happens that this is the day his baseball nine practices. I did not know that, or I would have excused him.

"But Nan spoke up and asked if she could not stay in and clean the boards. She said she liked to do it. I was a bit puzzled, but I said she might. Some of the other girls told me later why she offered to take Bert's place. I think that was very good of her."

Nan was all alone in her classroom later that afternoon, brushing the chalk marks off the boards and humming a little song to herself. when she heard a noise at one of the windows. Her room was on the first floor and the windows were close to the ground.

Nan looked in the direction of the sound and she was so surprised when she saw a dark face peering in at her that she dropped the eraser to the floor with a clatter and a cloud of dust arose.

"What do you want?" cried Nan, as the dark face at the window thrust itself farther and farther in. "Go away!"

But the face kept on coming in.

CHAPTER VII

A QUEER RECITATION

NAN BOBBSEY hardly knew what to do when she saw that strange, dark face peering in through the schoolroom window at her. If it had only looked in and passed on, she would not have thought much about it. But the face pushed itself farther and farther in through the open window. And of course there had to be a head to go with the face.

Naturally, there had to be a body to go with the head, and Nan was going to scream for help, for she knew some of the teachers and the janitor were still in the building, when, suddenly, she saw that there was no need for her to be frightened at all.

No sooner had the head and body belonging to the face thrust themselves farther in through the window than Nan saw that they belonged to the queer boy she and her brother

had met in the picnic woods—Jimmy Bigfish.

"Oh!" gasped Nan in relief. And again: "Oh!"

Then, as she said afterward, her legs felt so weak that she feared she would fall down. So she staggered to one of the front benches and sat there, still looking toward the window.

"Did I scare you, Nan?" asked Jimmy, as he swung himself up over the window sill and dropped into the room.

"A—a little!" she said in a low voice.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do that," and Jimmy seemed quite ashamed of himself. "I was just looking in and I didn't know anybody was here. But I'll finish cleaning off the boards for you," the dark-faced lad offered, picking up the eraser.

"Oh, no, I can do it! I'm all right now!" Nan hastened to say. "You just frightened me a little at first."

"I'll clean those boards!" insisted Jimmy. "It won't take me long," and he used the eraser so rapidly and raised such a cloud of dust that Nan laughed and sneezed at the same time.

"What did you look in the window that funny way for?" asked Nan, when the boards were all clean and ready for the next day's lessons.

"I wanted to see what sort of a school this was," Jimmy answered. "We're coming here next week, my sister and I."

"Oh, are you? That will be nice!" murmured Nan. "Have you moved into Lakeport yet?"

"We move in to-morrow, with my aunt," Jimmy replied. "But I came on ahead to look at the school. I waited until I thought everybody had gone and then I climbed up to this window. It looks like a nice school, all right," he went on, glancing at Nan's room, on the walls of which hung many pictures, while on the ledges of some of the windows were boxes filled with gay flowers.

"It is a nice room and Miss Clark is a lovely teacher," said Nan.

"Yes, it seems like a nice place," admitted the dark-faced lad. "I guess my sister will like it. I'll tell her."

"Is she back in the cabin in the woods?"

"No, she's here with me, Shine is."

"Here!" exclaimed Nan, looking around the room. She thought perhaps the strange boy's sister had slipped in through some other window. But Nan and Jimmy were the only ones in the classroom.

"Oh, I don't exactly mean she's right *here!*" said Jimmy, with a laugh. "I left her outside while I climbed up to have a look. But she can climb about as good as I can," he added, "and she could have come in the window if she'd wanted to."

"Oh, bring her in now—through the door—and show her the room!" eagerly exclaimed Nan. "That is, if she is going to be in this class."

"I don't know what class we'll be in," Jimmy said. "We haven't been to school much, but Shine is smarter than I am, even if she isn't so old."

"I'd like to see her," said Nan.

"I'll bring her in," offered Jimmy.

He fairly glided out of the room—Nan noticed that he always moved very quietly—and soon came back with a girl about two years younger than himself. She looked very much like him and had the same dark skin,

bright eyes, and white, shining teeth. Nan at once decided that Sunshine Bigfish was as "queer" as Jimmy was. Though what kind of people the two were Nan could not decide. They might be Gypsies, she half admitted, or some kind of Italians from the southern part of the Italian peninsula.

"This is Sunshine," and Jimmy led his sister toward Nan.

"I am glad to see you," said Nan. "Did Jimmy tell you how he drove away the snakes for us?"

"Yes," admitted Sunshine, in a low voice. She seemed rather shy, but Nan decided she was going to like the stranger.

"Ho!" laughed Jimmy. "Those green snakes didn't need any driving away. They were glad enough to go themselves."

"Jimmy says you are coming here to school," went on Nan.

"Yes," answered Shine. "I want to learn, and so does my brother. We have not been to school much. But I like this room," she said, and her eyes sparkled as she looked at the pictures and flowers.

"I hope you can be in it," said Nan.

"What reader are you in and how far have you gone in arithmetic?"

Jimmy and his sister mentioned what studies they had taken up and Nan decided they would just about fit in Miss Clark's room, with herself and Bert. There were several vacant desks in the room.

"Don't you want to come to our house and meet my mother?" Nan asked, for, now that the boards were clean, she was going home. It was getting late.

"Thanks, but we have to go back to meet our aunt," answered Shine. "She drove into town to-day to do some shopping and she said we might come up and look at the school, for we may come here next week. But now we must go and meet her at the post office and drive back to our cabin in the woods."

"Then I'll see you next week, when you come to school," said Nan, as she parted from them.

"Yes," murmured the dark-faced girl, and Jimmy waved a hand in farewell as Nan turned down the street that led to her home.

Nan was excited over what had happened, and when she told Bert about it at the sup-

per table that evening her brother said:

"I wish I had been there. I'd like to take Jimmy to the ball field and let him practice to see how he can play. We need a few more good players."

"What teams are you going to play against?" asked Nan.

"Oh, some of the other schools around here are getting up nines," Bert said, "and there may be another right in our own school."

"Two nines in our school?" exclaimed Nan. "What's the idea of that?"

"Oh," explained Bert a little reluctantly, "some of the fellows are sort of on the outs with me because they said I didn't put them in good positions, and they're talking of getting up a rival nine. I don't care. I got the best fellows on my team now. But I'd like to get that Jimmy Bigfish."

"What an odd name!" said Mrs. Bobbsey. "What sort of boy is he?"

But this the children could not tell, beyond the fact that he was very nice, though he was almost as dark as a Negro.

"Maybe he is a Negro," suggested Freddie. "He looked like one."

"No, he isn't," declared Bert. "He didn't talk a bit like a Negro nor look like one. His hair's straight. I'm sure he isn't."

"And Sunshine isn't, either," declared Nan. "She is very nice," she added, "but a bit shy. Maybe it's because she has lived in the woods so long."

"I only hope Jimmy is a good player," murmured Bert.

"Am I going to be a mascot on your team, Bert, when you get to playing?" Freddie wanted to know.

"Maybe—if you don't fall into a brook again," was the answer.

"Oh, I won't fall in any more!" promised Freddie eagerly.

Next day, when Nan at school told some of her schoolmates about the strange visit the evening before of Jimmy Bigfish and his sister, there was much talk and wondering about the strange, new children.

"If they're Negroes I won't play with them!" declared Grace Levine.

"Neither will I!" added Nellie Parks.

"It will be as bad if they're Gypsies!" exclaimed Helen Porter, for Nan had told

them how dark Jimmy and his sister were.

"I don't think they're Gypsies or Italians or Negroes," Nan said. "I don't know what they are."

"Well, some Negroes are all right," said one of the older girls. "Don't you remember Luella Beckett and her brother Washington? They were real nice colored folks."

"Yes, and so was Mary Toddley and her brothers Sam and Amos," added another. "But the Brawnham's were awful and so were those dirty Larkin children and old Mammy Ruster's kids—the ones that always went barefooted and stuck out their tongues at you."

"Well, maybe we'll find out something more later," said Nan, with a sigh.

So it remained a mystery and many were anxious to see the new pupils to decide for themselves what kind of children they were. But school was a busy place, and what with lessons during class hours and play afterward there was not much time to wonder about Jimmy Bigfish and his sister Sunshine.

Nan had heard some talk at home between her mother, Mrs. Lavine and Mrs. Parks

about an entertainment the ladies of the Charity Club were getting up to raise a fund for the poor of the town.

"We ought to have some of the children take part," Mrs. Parks had said.

"A good idea," added Mrs. Lavine.

"I'll speak to some of the school teachers about it," Nan heard her mother tell the two ladies. "They'll know who of their pupils can best do things that will help our entertainment."

This talk came back to Nan a few days later when one afternoon at the hour for the geography lesson, Miss Clark said:

"We are going to have a different sort of recitation now." She went over to the piano, struck a few chords, and asked: "How many of you boys and girls can sing?"

For a moment not a hand was raised. Then, after a little whispering, Nan put up her hand. So did Nellie, Grace and a few other girls. But not a boy's hand was raised.

"Well, that is pretty good," said Miss Clark. "We must inquire among the boys, though. Don't you sing, Bert?" she asked, looking directly at him.

Bert blushed and murmured:

"Just a little."

"I thought so," said the teacher. "Now how many of you can dance?"

Almost every girl's hand went up at once, and so did the hands of several boys.

"That's better!" and the teacher smiled. "Well, now, instead of a geography lesson, we are going to have a recitation in singing and dancing."

Many of the boys and girls looked at one another in surprise. What could it mean—singing and dancing in school?

CHAPTER VIII

BERT'S NINE

MISS CLARK remained seated at the piano, softly playing parts of several simple songs. Now and then she glanced down the room and she could hardly help smiling as she noticed the puzzled looks on the faces of the boys and girls.

Well might they be puzzled. Never before had any lessons but those in the book been recited during school hours. Of course on Friday afternoons there were generally some exercises, such as "speaking pieces," or even singing. But that was part of the school work.

"Perhaps I had better tell you what all this means," went on Miss Clark, as she continued to play soft music. "It has to do with the entertainment the Charity Club is going to give in about three weeks."

Then Nan remembered the talk she had overheard between her mother and other ladies of the committee. They had spoken of going to ask the school teachers who of their pupils could sing and dance well.

"We want to find out," went on Miss Clark, "who of you girls and boys would be willing to help with the ladies' entertainment. They cannot afford to hire any one to come and sing or dance for them, so they thought you boys and girls would be willing to. Would you?" and as the teacher asked this question every hand in the room was raised.

"I thought so!" and Miss Clark seemed much pleased. "But," she continued, "before I can tell the ladies of the Charity Club who will sing and dance for them I must find out who can do it the best among my pupils. So this is in the nature of an examination."

At the mention of "examination," several of the boys shuffled their feet and some groaned half aloud. Miss Clark laughed and said:

"There is nothing to be dreaded about this examination, and if any of you fail, no harm will be done. But I thought I would try you,

out, one, or perhaps a few, at a time, to see who are the best singers and dancers. No one need come forward to sing or dance who does not want to. But I think it will be very kind of you to offer your services to the ladies. Now we'll start off with some songs. Nan, will you sing?"

"Oh, all alone?" asked Nan, a bit bashful.

"Why not?" asked Miss Clark. "I can't tell how the voices are if you all sing together. I must try each one alone. Come, Nan."

Nan overcame her bashfulness, and though she heard her girl chums murmuring that they never would go up there all alone before everybody to sing, Nan left her seat and stood beside the piano.

There was singing every day in the school which the Bobbsey twins attended, and Nan knew several songs, as did her brothers and sister. Miss Clark turned the book to a page of a song she thought would be suitable for Nan and played the opening chords.

"Now!" she said in a low voice, and Nan began singing all alone.

At first she was a bit nervous, for she had

never done this before. But as the music went on and she found that she could remember the words and the tune, she became less frightened and toward the end she was singing clearly and sweetly. The second verse was even better than the first.

"Very good, Nan, and thank you," said Miss Clark, as the girl went to her seat. "Now who will be the next to try? I should like a boy!"

There was a nervous laugh among the boys at hearing this, and some of the girls giggled. Then Joe Norton did a rather bold thing, for he spoke right out in class and said:

"Bert Bobbsey can sing!"

"Aw, I can not! I can't sing any better than John Marsh can!" said Bert quickly, blushing a deep red.

"Perhaps you two can sing a duet," suggested Miss Clark, with a smile. She did not rebuke Joe for speaking without permission.

"That's what they can do, Miss Clark!" exclaimed Danny Rugg. "Bert and John know a funny song about a frog!"

"Do they? That's fine! Please come up here, Bert and John!" ordered the teacher.

There was no help for it, though Bert looked at Danny as if he intended to do something to him after school was out. And, as it developed, Bert and John did know a funny song about a frog, and in one part Bert imitated a frog's croaking quite naturally. The boys had learned the song and practiced it together and had even sung it once at an entertainment given by a group of boys in the Bobbseys' garage.

So, after their first shyness and nervousness had worn off, and when Miss Clark had found out how to play a simple accompaniment to the melody, Bert and John began their duet. They did very well, too, and the song was such a jolly, funny one, and Bert did the frog imitation so cleverly that even the teacher had to laugh. As for the boys and girls, they fairly shouted with glee, so that in some of the other rooms the noise of laughter was heard.

"I'm sure that will make quite a hit at the entertainment the Charity Club is going to give," said Miss Clark. "I must put down

the names of you two boys right away."

"Aw, Miss Clark, I don't want to sing before a whole lot of people!" objected Bert.

"I don't, either," grumbled John.

"It is for charity and to help the poor," explained Miss Clark. "We must all make some sacrifices for that, and I am sure you boys will be willing to do your share. It would not be playing the game fairly if you did not."

This struck the boys in the right spot. They knew what it meant not to play a game fairly, so, in the end, Bert and John agreed to give their frog song.

After that some other girls and boys were tried, one or two as soloists like Nan and the others in duets or quartettes. Miss Clark was glad to find that among her pupils she could recommend several as performers in the coming Charity Show.

Then she tried the pupils out as dancers. It was here that, on the whole, the girls did better than the boys, for the latter, even Bert, were so embarrassed and nervous that they appeared awkward.

"Well, I think that will be enough," Miss

Clark said at the end of the queer recitation. "I have several singers and not a few dancers. It is very good."

Nan and some of her girl chums were picked to dance as well as sing, but in the dancing part of the program Bert and his friends did not shine at this try-out. They were just as glad of it. Though Nan said afterward that Bert could have danced if he had wanted to.

"But I didn't want to!" he chuckled. "It's bad enough to sing that frog song."

"You do it well, though," Nan complimented him.

"And your song was good, too," said Bert.

The tests of those who might sing, dance or recite in the Charity Show went on in all the other classes of the school, and later Miss Moffett, teacher of Flossie and Freddie, reported to Miss Clark that Nan's brother and sister had done a funny little song very well, and had also danced.

"I'm sure they'll make a hit!" said Miss Moffett as she related how well Flossie and her brother had made their bows.

"Yes, the Bobbsey twins can do many things," agreed Miss Clark.

There was a buzz of excited talk when school was out that afternoon, for the boys and girls spoke of the test that had taken place in their rooms, and all were agog over the coming entertainment.

"Hey, Bert, I hear you are going to croak like an alligator!" called Tim Dart, a boy who was in a class ahead of the Bobbsey lad. Tim was a bullying sort of boy.

"No, not an alligator—he's going to bellow like a bull!" chimed in Ed Worl, who was Tim's special chum.

There was laughter at this, and Bert did not like it, but he said nothing and, turning to Danny, Charlie, Sam and Joe, said:

"Come on fellows, we must go over and have baseball practice."

At this Tim seemed all attention and, dropping his teasing manner, asked:

"What's this about baseball practice?"

"Bert Bobbsey has organized a nine," explained Joe Norton. "I'm the pitcher and Bert's the catcher. He can knock home runs, too! We're going to practice and then we're going to challenge the Hillside School team."

The school where the Bobbsey twins at-

tended was now known as the Montrose, and on the other side of town was another school, about the same size, named the Hillside.

"This is the first I heard we had a ball nine in our school," said Ed Worl.

"Same here!" chimed in Tim. "What's the matter with me and Ed?" he asked Bert. "I'm a good pitcher."

"We have a pitcher," said Bert, nodding toward Joe. "But if you and Ed want to come out and practice maybe I can put you on."

"Ho! You're talking big!" sneered Tim. "Are you the captain?"

"Sure he is!" said Danny. "And a good captain, too!"

Ed and Tim whispered together a moment and then Tim said:

"All right. We'll come out and practice and I want a chance to pitch. I'll show you I can beat Joe Norton."

"And I can knock more home runs in a day than Bert Bobbsey can in a week!" boasted Ed.

"Come out and try it!" invited John Marsh.

The crowd of boys went to the baseball field and soon two practice nines were organized. Bert was captain of one, and gathered about him were most of the boys who had played on his side the day of the picnic. Just for practice Charlie Mason agreed to be captain of the other team, which was made up of players some of whom were older than Bert and his chums.

Tim Dart demanded, as was his right, a chance to pitch, and when he took his place in the box, where Joe Norton had been doing good work, Ed Worl cried:

"Now we'll see some real curves!"

Tim had a strong delivery, but he was "wild," and after the first two or three balls he hit one of the other players rather hard, though of course not intending to do so.

"Ouch!" cried Harry Gorse, the lad who was struck.

"Take your base!" ordered the umpire.

"What's the good of taking my base, I can't run!" whimpered Harry, for the ball had struck him on the leg and he was limping.

Bert Bobbsey came to a sudden decision.

"Joe, you go back in the box," he said.

"I'm not going to let Tim pitch. He's too rough."

"Who says I can't pitch?" demanded Tim in angry tones.

"I do," answered Bert quietly.

"And he's the captain!" added Sammie Todd.

"Aw, rats!" cried Ed Worl. "You fellows are babies! Why don't you play with a mush ball and be done with it?"

"Just the same you can't pitch on my nine Tim," declared Bert. "Joe is going to be the pitcher. Maybe I'll let you play out in the field, but you can't pitch."

"I can't, eh? Do you know what I'll do if you don't let me pitch, Bert Bobbsey? Do you know what I'll do?"

He walked toward Bert as if to strike him, but the Bobbsey lad did not quail. His chums gathered around him and there was a tense moment while they all waited to hear what the bully would say next.

CHAPTER IX

THE NEW PUPILS

BERT BOBBSEY and his friends on the ball nine thought that after his angry talk Tim Dart would say something like this:

"I'm going to punch you, that's what I'm going to do!" Or he might say: "You'll have to fight me if you don't let me pitch on this nine!"

But instead of this Tim, with a sneer on his face, exclaimed:

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do! I'm going to get up another nine of my own, Bert Bobbsey, and it will be better than yours and we'll play all the best games!"

"That's what we'll do!" chimed in Ed Worl. "We'll start a nine of our own!"

Bert felt better on hearing this. For, though he was not a coward and would not

hold back from a fight if it was in a good cause, he did not want to get into a battle of fists with either Tim or Ed.

They were bigger boys than Bert and it would hardly have been fair for them to fight him.

But big boys do not always do the things that are fair. And though Bert felt that his schoolmates would gather around him and help him if there should be need, it was better that there should be no fight. And now it seemed unlikely that there would be one.

"Yes, that's what we'll do," sneered Tim. "We'll start a nine of our own, and I'll be the pitcher!"

"I'll be catcher!" added Ed.

Some of the boys on Bert's team laughed at this, for Ed was not considered very skillful when it came to standing behind the bat. At the sound of this laughter Tim scowled and doubled up his fists. But Bert, whispering to his chums not to make more trouble, said:

"You can start another nine if you want to. I don't care. There's plenty of room to play ball in around here. But I started this team and I have a right to say who'll play on it."

"Course he has!" agreed Sammie Todd.

"It's Bert Bobbsey's nine," added Joe Norton.

"No, it isn't exactly my nine," corrected Bert. "It's the school nine, and if we want to win games from other nines we have got to have good players."

Bert and his particular friends were glad when Tim and Ed shuffled off the field, talking about what a fine team they would have.

"We'll beat your nine all to pieces when we play you!" declared Tim as a parting shot when he strode away.

"Well, now let's start the game," suggested Bert when the trouble makers were gone. "We need a lot of practice."

It was more of a practice game than anything else that was held on the lot that afternoon. There were many misplays and mistakes, but Bert kept at his team-mates to do better. He, himself, played hard and knocked one home run and what would have been another, except that he slipped and fell while running in from third base and so was put out.

Joe Norton, too, did well in the pitcher's

box and struck out several players on the other side which, of course, was not a regular nine but just a number of boys picked to give Bert's side practice.

"Well, we did pretty well," Bert said at the end of the game, which his side won by a score of ten to six. "But we need more practice."

"And if we had some more and heavier batters and fellows who could catch better in the out-field we'd like it," added Joe. "I thought you said," he went on to Bert as they walked home together after the game, "that there was some sort of Italian boy coming to school who might be a strong player."

"Oh, you mean Jimmy Bigfish!" remarked Bert. "I didn't say he was an Italian, for I don't know that he is. But he looks like a good ball player, and he's smart. If he comes to school we'll give him a chance to show what he can do."

"Well, we need a few more good players," said Joe.

As Bert turned into the path that led through the back lots to his home, he passed the barn that had been turned into a garage when Mr. Bobbsey gave up keeping horses.

Suddenly Bert heard a voice calling from the garage:

"Oh, come and get me! Help me down! I'm caught!"

"That's Freddie!" exclaimed Bert, breaking into a run as he heard his brother's tones. "What's he up to now?"

It did not take Bert long to get inside the garage, only part of which was used for the cars. In that part which used to be the hay-mow Bert saw, hanging by one leg from a dangling rope, his small brother. Freddie was swaying to and fro, head down, and lustily yelling:

"Help me! Help me!"

"I'll help you!" shouted Bert, springing to his brother's aid. "But what in the world were you trying to do?"

He clasped Freddie in his arms, raising him to take the weight off the rope, and then he loosened the loop that was caught around Freddie's ankle.

"Oh! Oh!" gasped the little fellow, as he was stood upon his feet again, "I'm—I'm much obliged, Bert!"

"I should think you would be!" chuckled

the baseball captain. "If I hadn't come along just as I did you might have been hurt, hanging upside down that way. What did you do it for?"

"I didn't do it," stated Freddie.

"Then, who did?" demanded Bert. "If it was those fellows, Ed and Tim, who hung you up that way I'll——"

"Nobody did it! I did it myself! I mean—oh, well, anyhow, I didn't mean to," Freddie went on to explain. "I was practicing and I slipped and my foot got caught in the rope and I couldn't get loose."

"What were you practicing for?" Bert wanted to know.

"To be in the Charity Club play. I wanted to do a trapeze act instead of singing or dancing with Flossie," said Freddie. "I think it's silly to sing and dance, but they're going to make me. So I thought if I could do a trapeze act, like in the circus, it would be better."

"It's too dangerous," decided Bert. "You might have been hurt. Now, don't try it again, will you?"

"No, I guess I won't," Freddie promised, rubbing his ankle where the rope had hurt it.

It was a few days after this that Bert and Nan, entering the school yard a little while before the last bell, saw a group of boys and girls gathered in one corner. In the center of the group seemed to be an object of curiosity.

"I wonder what the matter is," murmured Bert.

"I hope it isn't anything Flossie and Freddie are doing!" sighed Nan, for her smaller brother and sister had started off to school ahead of her and Bert.

"What would they be doing?" Bert asked.

"Oh, no telling! Perhaps showing off the dance they are to do in the Charity Show," sighed Nan. "You never know what they are going to do!"

But when she and Bert reached the group of their schoolmates they saw that the excitement, such as it was, had been caused by the arrival of Jimmy Bigfish and his sister Sunshine. The two dark-skinned children stood in the midst of the other pupils, and the new ones did not look very happy.

"What's the matter here?" asked Bert, shoving his way through the crowd. Bert was a

born leader and a general favorite. He was always in front when anything was going on.

"Look who's coming to our school!" exclaimed Grace Lavine, with an unpleasant laugh, and she pointed to Jimmy and his sister.

"Well, why can't we come here to school?" demanded Jimmy. "We have moved into Lakeport. We're going to live here, and my aunt says this is the school for us to come to."

"But if they don't want us here we can go," said Sunshine in a low voice.

"We will not! We have a right to come here!" insisted her brother.

"Of course you have!" chimed in Bert. "What's the matter, anyhow?" he asked, turning to look at his schoolmates with a puzzled air. "Why can't Jimmy and Sunshine come here to school?"

"Do you know them?" asked Joe Norton.

"Sure, I know them!" declared Bert.

"Look at what kind of children they are," said Helen Porter. "We don't want such kind here!" Her voice was sneering.

"What's the matter with them?" demanded Nan.

There was silence for a moment and then a voice murmured:

"We don't want any more Negroes in our school! There are enough already—nine or ten of 'em."

Jimmy Bigfish turned like a flash and cried:
"We're not Negroes!"

"Even if they were they would have just as good a right to come here to school as any of us!" cried Bert.

"Bet they are Negroes!" put in Danny Rugg.

"Oh, we're not! We're not!" and Sunshine began to cry, so that her name, just then, might properly have been Rain.

"Negroes are just as good as anybody else!" cried Jimmy. "I'm not one and neither is my sister. But I know some Negro boys and girls and they wouldn't have acted this way—not like you're doing!" and he turned angrily from the crowd.

"Oh, Jimmy, let's go away!" sobbed his sister.

"No!" cried Bert Bobbsey. "This isn't right! What's the matter with you fellows, anyhow?" he cried to some of his particular

chums. "This is the boy who wants to play on our nine, and we need some husky batters like him."

"He can play on it for all of me," said Joe Norton. "We do need some more good players, Bert, and lots of professional teams have Negro players on 'em and they are all right."

"I tell you I'm not a Negro!" cried Jimmy Bigfish.

"What makes you so dark then?" asked a girl's voice.

Before Jimmy or his sister could answer, the last bell began to ring and the children began hurrying into the school house. But Jimmy and his sister remained standing there in the corner, forlorn and sad.

CHAPTER X

JIMMY'S STORY

BERT and Nan Bobbsey had hurried off with the other pupils at the sound of the clanging last bell. But before entering the school Bert turned and saw Jimmy and his sister still standing where they had been the center of the curious and not very kind group a few minutes before.

"Come on in!" called Bert.

"Else you'll be late," added Nan.

"We don't know what room to go to," Jimmy replied.

"And I—I don't like it here—not at all!" declared his sister.

"Oh, you will like it when you get acquainted," called Nan, turning back toward the dark-faced girl.

"I guess the others don't want to get acquainted with us," said Shine sadly.

"They will when they get to know you," Bert insisted. "Now you'd better come on in. You have only a few minutes."

"Where'll we go?" asked Jimmy, walking slowly toward the school.

"They can be in our room," Nan said to her brother, for she had told him of the day Jimmy looked in the window when she was cleaning the blackboards. "They're both in our grade and Miss Clark will like them, I'm sure."

"New pupils always have to go to Mr. Tarton's office first," said Bert, speaking of the school principal. "But I guess they could come into our room for a while."

"But it would be better to have them go to Mr. Tarton's office first," decided Nan, agreeing with her brother. "Then when he brings them up to our room nobody can say anything."

"I'll show them where it is," Bert offered.

So while Nan went on to her classroom, having made sure that Flossie and Freddie were all right, Bert led Jimmy and Sunshine Big-

fish to the office of the principal, who was rather surprised at the entrance of the dark-faced pair.

"Here are some new pupils, Mr. Tarton," Bert said. "This is Jimmy Bigfish and his sister Sunshine. They just moved into town from the woods and they want to come to school here."

"Well, I'm sure we shall be glad to have them," said Mr. Tarton, with a kind smile. "It was good of you to bring them in, Bert. I'll have a little talk with them and decide what grades they are fitted for."

Bert was late entering his room and Miss Clark looked up in surprise, for the Bobbsey twins were nearly always on time. Nan, of course, was in her seat.

"Why, Bert!" exclaimed his teacher in rather shocked tones. "Why are you tardy?"

"I had to take two new pupils to Mr. Tarton's office," Bert explained, and then Miss Clark smiled, for she did not want her class record spoiled. So far that term no one had been late.

"That's all right. You are excused," she

said. "And now we will go on with our lessons.

The recitations had not gone very far before there was an interruption, and in came Mr. Tarton, followed by Jimmy and his sister. Miss Clark did not show any surprise, but some of the boys and girls gasped in wonder at the entrance of the children who had caused such a commotion in the school yard.

"I have brought you two new pupils," Miss Clark," said the principal. "They are about fitted for your grade. This is Jimmy Bigfish and his sister Sunshine. They have recently come to Lakeport."

At the mention of the odd names some of the boys and girls began to giggle. Both Miss Clark and the principal looked sharply at the class and Mr. Tarton said:

"That will do! You should learn to be polite, some of you. Though Bigfish may seem an odd name to you I dare say some of your names sound as odd to this boy and girl. Don't laugh at names. Your own may be made fun of some day."

This quieted the gigglers. Jimmy and

Shine were too dark in complexion for any one to tell whether or not they flushed when their names were laughed at. But Nan and Bert were sure it could not be very pleasant for them.

"I will now leave Jimmy and his sister with you, Miss Clark," went on the head of the school. "And I hope your other boys and girls," he went on, "will help them if they find the lessons too hard at first."

Mr. Tarton left the room, and Miss Clark, with a kind smile, showed Jimmy to a seat near Bert Bobbsey while Shine was given a place near Nan, who smiled cheerfully at the strange girl. But Shine did not smile back. Her heart was bitter and sad. Nor did Jimmy seem as cheerful as he had that day in the woods when he found Flossie's doll.

Miss Clark went on with the class work, after giving the new pupils their books. She did not call on them for some time, but at last, when Helen Porter and Grace Lavine had failed on a question in geography about a river in the Northwest, the teacher turned to the dark-faced girl and said:

"I wonder if Sunshine could answer that question?"

To the surprise of all, not only did Jimmy's sister give the right answer but she added some facts about the river which none of the others knew.

"That is very good!" said Miss Clark, and Nan thought a warm glow of pleasure came to the tanned cheeks of Sunshine Bigfish. Jimmy also seemed pleased at his sister's success.

The morning session went on, though Miss Clark did not again call on Sunshine. She let Jimmy recite in mental arithmetic, however, and he did as well as any of the other boys, though no better.

The recess bell rang and there was a joyful putting away of books as the children hurried out to play. Bert noticed that Jimmy and his sister lagged behind the others and he thought perhaps they did not know what to do. So he walked over to them and said:

"This is recess. You can go out in the yard and play."

"Oh, yes, I know what recess is," said Jimmy, and his tones were not very happy.

"But I guess nobody will play with us if we do go in the yard."

"Oh, yes they will!" insisted Bert. "Come on!"

"You come with me, Shine," Nan said to the girl.

"Well, I'm not afraid to go out," said Jimmy. "But from the way they treated us this morning when we came to school I guess they won't like us."

"Why is that?" asked Bert.

"I don't know unless it's on account of the color of our skin. But we can't help that."

"Oh, they'll play with you now," said Bert, though he was not quite sure of what he said. "I guess it was only because you were strangers this morning. You belong to our school, now."

Jimmy did not appear very well satisfied, but Bert went with him into the yard, while Nan followed with Shine. And there just what Jimmy had feared would happen came to pass. At the sight of the two new pupils many others who had been playing games stopped their fun and walked away as the two dark-faced ones drew near.

"They shouldn't let so many Negroes come to our school," said a girl in a low voice, though not so low but what Jimmy heard.

"Look here!" he exclaimed. "How many times have I got to tell you I'm not a Negro. Though I wouldn't be ashamed of it if I were."

"Maybe they're Gypsies," said a boy in the crowd, though he slunk away before Bert could see who he was.

"No, we aren't Gypsies, either!" said Jimmy. "But if you don't want to play with us you needn't!"

He turned proudly away, and his sister walked over to his side. Here was a hard test for Nan and Bert, but they did not fail. Nan kept her place by the side of Shine and said:

"I'll play with you if you want me to."

While Bert said to Jimmy:

"Look here! I don't care if you are a Gypsy or a Negro. We want you to try for our ball nine. You don't need to tell us anything about yourself if you don't want to, but——"

"Oh, I'm not afraid to tell, or ashamed,

either!" and Jimmy held his head higher. "I'd just as soon tell you my story and you can tell the others, if you like," he added, for the four were now by themselves on one side of the school yard.

"My father was an Indian!" said Jimmy suddenly.

"An Indian?" cried Bert. "A real Indian?"

"Yes, a real, American Indian from the Northwest. That's why we have such dark skins, my sister and I. We are half Indian and half white. My mother was a white woman, but she and my father loved each other very much. She met him in the Northwest and married him there. But before she died, which was a short time after my father died, my mother asked my aunt to bring us back to this state, for she was born here. Now you know about me. I'm Jimmy Bigfish, half Indian!"

The boy drew himself up proudly as he said this and Sunshine stepped close to him. It was as if they defied the whole school.

For a moment there was silence in the little group of Bert, his sister and the two Indians, or halfbreeds as they ought properly to be

called. Then Bert's eyes danced with delight as he exclaimed:

"Say, that's jolly! I always wanted to be an Indian! That's why you know so much about snakes, isn't it?" he went on.

"I suppose so," admitted Jimmy, with a smile.

"And that's how you found Flossie's doll!" exclaimed Nan.

"Yes, my father taught me how to run a trail," the half Indian lad admitted.

"Everything's going to be all right now!" cried Bert as he ran toward a group of his chums. "Soon as they know you're part Indian they'll be glad to play with you, Jimmie! I guess everything will be all right now!"

CHAPTER XI

SUNSHINE'S SONG

BERT BOBBSEY did not guess matters quite straight. Eagerly, he told Jimmy's story to some of the boys and girls who had made sneering remarks about Negroes and Gypsies and Bert ended with:

"Now none of you need be afraid of playing with Jimmy and Sunshine. They're *real* Americans—more American than we are," he added, "for the Indians were in America before even the Pilgrim Fathers came."

"Who says they are Indians?" asked Grace Lavine.

"Not whole Indians, only half," said Bert looking back to where his sister was walking toward him and his schoolmates, followed by Jimmy and Sunshine.

"Who told you?" asked Tim Dart, with a sneer.

"Why, Jimmy did," said Bert.

"And you believed him? Ho! Ho!" chuckled the bully. "If he told you the moon was made of lollypops you'd believe him, I s'pose!"

"No, I wouldn't," said Bert quietly. "But he says he's half Indian and I believe that. Anybody can see that's what he and his sister are—part Indians."

"They are if you let them tell it!" chuckled Ed.

"What do you mean?" demanded Bert.

"I mean they're either Negroes or Gypsies and they're ashamed to own it!" snapped Ed.

Jimmy and his sister were close enough to hear these words and they seemed much hurt by them. But Jimmy kept his temper and said quietly, though his lips quivered:

"Nobody need believe me if he doesn't want to. But we are part Indian, my sister and I. You can ask my aunt if we aren't. And we don't have to play with those that don't want us. Come on, Shine," he said, taking his sister's hand.

"You aren't going home, are you?" asked Bert, in dismay. "Not right after you've started school!"

"No, I'm not going home," Jimmy declared. "I'm going to stick it out. But we will stay by ourselves, my sister and I. And now I'm going in the classroom and study!"

Bert and Nan did not know what to say to this. They had tried to take the part of the new pupils but without good results. In the few minutes that remained of recess the Bobbsey twins tried to talk to their schoolmates to make them more friendly toward Jimmy and his sister. But they were met with sneering looks and words, several of the older pupils declaring that they were not going to have anything to do with the newcomers.

Except for Tim Dart and Ed Worl, many of the boys came gradually to the same view as Bert Bobbsey—that a lad who was half Indian was a good chap to know.

"Why, he'll be dandy on our ball team if we find he can play the game!" declared Bert. "I've heard of lots of Indians on college baseball teams and on football elevens! I bet Jimmy can run!"

"That's right!" chimed in Joe Norton.

"Why, there's a college out West, or somewhere, and only Indians are allowed to go

to it—whole Indians, not half ones like Jimmy Bigfish.”

“I don’t care if he’s half or quarter Indian, I like him!” declared Bert.

“I’m satisfied to have him on the nine,” said Sammie Todd.

“So am I!” added Danny Rugg, and then the other members of the team fell into line and Bert was glad of it.

On her part Nan tried to get her girl chums to accept Shine as a playmate, but was met with cold looks and shrugs of shoulders, while some girls said openly they never would have anything to do with one who looked so much like a Gypsy.

It was vain for Nan to explain that Indians were real and original Americans and insist that they came of a proud and noble race. The girls still remained cold toward Sunshine.

This only made Nan the more eager, and when she heard Bert’s chums had made fairly good friends with Jimmy she redoubled her efforts to have matters more pleasant for Shine. Flossie and Freddie, of course, following the example of their brother and sis-

ter, made friends at once with the Indian lad and Shine.

Several days passed, with the boys taking up with Jimmy, but the girls, aside from Nan, having little or nothing to do with Shine. At first the Indian girl wept in secret over this, but at last her brave spirit showed itself and she held her head high and came and went with only Nan for a friend.

Perhaps some of the feeling of the other girls against Shine was because she was so smart in class. She really was. More than once she answered questions that none of the others, even Nan, could reply to, and Miss Clark was properly proud of her new pupil. There came a day when Shine went to the head of the class and many of the girls openly "turned up their noses," as Nan said when this happened.

Meanwhile practice for the Charity Show went on, sometimes in the school after classes were over for the day. The pupils the different teachers had picked out for the parts were taken in charge by Mrs. Bobbsey and other ladies of the committee and a program was being made ready. The show would take

place in a few weeks now and much practice was necessary. Miss Clark was on the committee, helping in training the boys and girls in songs and dances after school.

It was one afternoon while Miss Clark was drilling Nan and other girls in a song that was not going any too well that the somewhat tired and nervous teacher exclaimed:

"No, no! You don't sing it at all right! You don't put any life into it. Try to give it more emphasis. Now once more, please."

As she went back to the piano there sounded out in the little grove of trees, near the deserted school yard, a voice singing. Clear and pure it rose in the air—a girl's voice, singing a song with strange words.

"Hark! What is that?" asked Miss Clark, holding up her hand for silence.

Through the open windows floated the song. It could be heard more plainly now, but no one knew the words.

"It's Sunshine!" exclaimed Nan in a low voice.

"Who?" asked the teacher.

"Sunshine Bigfish," went on Nan. "She's singing an Indian song. I've heard it be-

fore, but she never sang so nicely until now."

"It's a wonderful song!" said Miss Clark in a low voice. "A beautiful song—sad, but most Indian songs are sad. Girls, that's just the kind of voice we want in the Charity Show. I didn't know Sunshine could sing. Will one of you please ask her to come in here? I'd like to hear her sing that with a piano accompaniment. That song may be a hit in the show. We must have Sunshine sing for us."

"I'll go get her!" offered Nan, hastening from the room.

As she left Grace Lavine whispered:

"If that girl who says she's part Indian sings in the Charity Show, I'm not going to be in it! So there!"

CHAPTER XII

AN EXCITING GAME

NAN BOBBSEY, hurrying across the field back of the school, saw Shine Bigfish amid a grove of trees. The Indian girl, as she was generally called, was standing on the edge of a little pond, looking across it. Her back was toward Nan and she started suddenly when she heard the footsteps behind her.

"Oh!" exclaimed Shine, with a smile, "I didn't know anybody was here but me."

"I just came," said Nan. "Was that you singing just now?" she asked. "I mean singing that pretty song."

"Why, I was singing an Indian song my father taught me," Shine replied. "I didn't think any one heard me."

"But we did—over in school where we are practicing for the Charity Show," replied Nan.

"Miss Clark sent me to get you—to ask you to come in and sing while she plays the piano for you."

"Oh, I couldn't do that!" murmured the Indian girl, shrinking back.

"Why not?"

"Oh, I've never sung when anybody played. My father and I used to sing out in the woods, but we never had any music played."

"Songs sound better with a little accompaniment," stated Nan. "We are going to sing that way in the show and when Miss Clark heard your voice she said you must be one of the singers."

"Oh, I couldn't—ever! I never would have sung out here by myself if I'd thought any one could hear me!"

"Oh, but please come back with me!" pleaded Nan. "Miss Clark wants to try your voice."

After a little more urging the Indian girl agreed, but she said:

"I don't mind singing for Miss Clark, because she has been kind to me; but I don't want to sing in any show."

"Some of the other girls didn't either, at

first," said Nan. "But they don't mind now—they think it's fun. And it's to help the poor, you know. Come along."

So, though she was shy about it, Shine went back with Nan and was warmly welcomed by Miss Clark.

Some of the girls rather "stuck up their noses," at the idea of Shine singing in the entertainment, but many were curious to hear what the Indian girl could do when Miss Clark played for her. So no one said anything really mean, though Grace and Nellie were seen whispering together mysteriously.

"If you will just hum the song for me," said Miss Clark to Shine, when she stood near the piano, "I think I can pick out an accompaniment. Then I should like to have you sing it for me."

"I'll do my best," said Shine, though her heart was beating fast.

After a few trials Miss Clark managed to pick out the tune and then she played softly while the Indian girl sang. It was a simple melody, rather sad, but beautiful. As she sang, Jimmy's sister seemed gradually to forget that she was in a schoolroom. It was as

if she stood out in the woods near a lake and sang to the birds.

"That was very well done!" said Miss Clark, softly clapping her hands at the close of the song, and Shine's face showed her pleasure at the words. "With a little more practice, and when I know the accompaniment better, we shall do very well. I am going to tell the committee to let you sing at the entertainment, Shine."

"Oh, no, please don't! I—I—should be afraid!"

"I'll be there with you," put in Nan kindly.

There was a movement among some of the other girls as though they were going to object to the Indian coming among them to take part in the Charity Show. Nan was about to utter some sharp words to Grace and Nellie, who seemed to be the leaders against Shine, when the door of the schoolroom opened and in came Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Who is your new singer?" she asked Miss Clark. "I was coming over to see how the practice was making out and I heard a strange song. Who sang it?"

"Oh, Mother, it was a real Indian song and Shine sang it!" exclaimed Nan. "Miss Clark wants her to be in the show and please can't she?"

Miss Clark laughed and said:

"Well, Nan seems to have told it all in a few words. I think we have discovered a new soloist, Mrs. Bobbsey," and she related how the song had been heard floating in through the open windows.

"Let me hear it again," begged Nan's mother.

This time Shine was not so nervous, and as Miss Clark played the accompaniment a little better the result was a beautiful melody. Shine sang as though her heart went out with the words which, though in a strange language, were beautiful.

"You certainly must sing in the entertainment!" decided Mrs. Bobbsey, and as she was chairman of one of the important committees and as many of the mothers of the girls depended on Nan's mother for leadership, there was nothing more openly said against Sunshine Bigfish.

But for all that there were a number of unkind remarks made, as Nan said, "behind Shine's back."

The Indian girl, however, did not hear these and after her first shyness she was glad she was going to have a part in the entertainment to help raise money for the poor.

"If you could only sing that song in Indian costume it would make a wonderful hit!" cried Nan, when she and Shine walked home later that afternoon.

"Maybe I can," answered Shine. "My aunt has some Indian dresses that belonged to my mother."

"That will be fine!" exclaimed Nan. "Oh, you will surely be the hit of the play! Does your brother sing, too?"

"A little. But Jimmy likes baseball better than music, and I don't believe even your mother could get him up on the platform."

"Well, we'll let him go then," decided Nan. "But I'm glad we are going to have you."

As Shine had said, Jimmy Bigfish was now in the full swing of playing baseball. He had

been given a trial on Bert's nine and had "made good," as Bert said. It developed that Jimmy could play well on first base, and he was given that position. He was also a good batter, though he had not yet knocked any home runs.

There came a day, after many afternoons of practice, when the Montrosé School was to play Hillside on the grounds where Bert and his chums laid out a fairly good diamond. Some trouble was caused by the fact that Tim Dart and Ed Worl had organized a rival nine in Montrose, and they had also challenged Hillside. For a time the captain of the Hillside team, Ralph North, did not know which nine to agree to play.

But Mr. Tarton, the school principal, settled the matter by deciding that since Bert's team was first organized those boys should have the honor of meeting Hillside.

So it was arranged, and early on this Saturday afternoon a crowd of boys might have been seen hurrying toward the diamond. Most of the lads were going to look on, for Bert and his chums of the nine were already out there practicing. In a short time the

Hillside school nine and its followers would arrive.

"Are you coming to see the game, Nan?" Bert asked his sister as he was leaving.

"Of course I am," she answered.

"Can't we come, too?" begged Freddie. "I got to go 'cause I'm the mascot. Bert said so!"

"If Freddie goes I got to go, too!" insisted Flossie.

"Yes, I'll take you," promised Nan. "Go wash your faces!" and for once the small Bobbsey twins did not object to this as they usually did.

There was quite a crowd of boys, and not a few men, at the field when Nan arrived with her brother and sister. There were also a good many girls and a sprinkling of women, the sisters and mothers of the players. There were not seats for all, but a few benches had been put in place and the ladies sat on these. The others stood up or sat on the grass.

"How are my curves?" asked Joe of Bert after they had finished the practice.

"Good!" was the answer. "If you can

sting 'em in and I can bat out a couple of home runs we'll beat."

"Jimmy Bigfish is playing fine," said Sammie Todd.

"He sure is!" agreed Charlie Mason. "We didn't make any mistake putting him on the team."

"The Hillside school has a strong team, though," said John Marsh. "Look at Sid Holden rap 'em out, would you!" He pointed to one of the rival players who was batting out flies for his comrades in the field to catch.

Bert was a little nervous. It was the first time he had ever been captain of a baseball team and much depended on this game. If it was lost Tim Dart and Ed Worl would sneer and say, "I told you so!"

Also, the team from Hillside seemed made up of bigger and stronger boys than those with Bert. And as several others after Sid Holden knocked out practice flies for long distances, Bert began to have a little fear.

The practice was over, the umpire had been selected, the crowd was waiting and all was in readiness. Flossie and Freddie sat with

Nan on the grass in a front row, and Freddie was eagerly anxious.

"I'm mascot for my brother's team," he told several spectators.

"Well, that team surely ought to win, then!" chuckled a man near Freddie.

"Play ball!" suddenly called the umpire.

Bert took his position in the catcher's box, Joe Norton went out to pitch, Jimmy Bigfish was on first base and the other six players took their places. Bert's team was to have last inning, as is always the case with the home side.

"Ball one!" called the umpire as Joe sent in his first one.

"Aw, that was a strike!" cried Bert. "It was right over the plate! Have a heart!"

"That was a ball!" decided the umpire.

So Bert had to accept the ruling.

The next one was a strike, though the boy at the bat did not move his stick, and this time he was angry.

"It was 'way out there!" he said, pointing a foot from the plate.

"I said it was a strike and that's what it was!" the umpire said. "Go on! Play ball!"

The next ball the batter knocked well into the field and got to first base, and Bert began to wonder if Joe was as good a pitcher as they had hoped he was.

But after Joe got over his nervousness he did better, striking out the next man. The third one up, however, knocked a two-bagger and then was followed by another who knocked a little fly, and one run came in for Hillside.

"We have to do better than this!" said Bert in a low voice to Joe as he walked half way to the pitcher's box to hand him the ball.

"I'll fool this next lad!" declared Joe, and he did, striking him out. Then the one that followed went out on a foul Bert caught and the inning ended with one run against Montrose.

Bert and his team mates played well, and Bert knocked a two-bagger. But this was the best he could do. None of the others did as well, two men being struck out and a third being caught out, so Bert was left on third base when the inning ended and there was a "goose egg" for Montrose.

"Now, fellows, we have to play harder!"

said Bert to his mates as they took the field for the second inning. "If we don't we'll be beaten!"

"We'll win!" declared Jimmy Bigfish. "We haven't started to play yet!"

So it seemed, for though the other side got one more run, that was the end, and after that the players went out in short order, two being struck out by Joe.

"Your curves are getting better!" said Bert to his pitcher as the inning ended.

But the score was still two to nothing in favor of Hillside and it looked serious. As Bert came up to the bat again Freddie cried:

"Knock a home run, Bert!"

Everybody laughed, and Bert did also. But it seemed to bring him good luck and he cracked the ball so hard that he really sent it away out over the head of the center fielder and raced in with the first home run for his side.

"Hurray! Hurray!" yelled Bert's chums, and there was applause from the crowd, Nan and Flossie joining in.

From then on until the eighth inning the game was a sort of seesaw. First Bert's side

would be ahead and then the Hillside team. But in the eighth, when the Hillside nine had three men on base, one of their players knocked a two-bagger, bringing in three runs. This put them two ahead. But when Bert's boys went to bat in the eighth they managed to get two runs, which made the score even.

"Whew!" exclaimed the man to whom Freddie had confided the fact that he was mascot, "this is going to be a hot game! Tied in the eighth! I'm glad I came."

Indeed, it was an exciting game and when Bert and his chums took the field for the beginning of the ninth inning their faces were grim and set.

"We mustn't let them get another run!" said Bert to Joe.

"That's right! And we have to get at least one ourselves to win the game. You'll have to knock another home run, Bert!"

"I'll do my best!"

CHAPTER XIII

MISSING TWINS

"STRIKE one!" called the umpire as Joe Norton sent in the first ball when the Hillside team came to bat for the last time.

"That's the way to do it!" shouted Bert, into whose glove the ball landed with a loud thump. "Two more like that, Joe, and you'll have this fellow out."

"Aw, he can't strike me out!" boasted Sid Holden, who was considered the heaviest batter on the rival team.

"Just you watch!" retorted Bert.

But his heart sank when the next ball that came from Joe was followed by a resounding crack as the bat met it.

"Gosh! There goes a home run!" cried Bert.

But it was only a foul tip, and though he tried to get it, he could not.

"Strike two!" called the umpire, for a foul counts the same as a strike except on the last.

"Whang out the next one for a homer, Sid!" shouted his companions.

"That's what I'll do!" was the answer.

"Ball one!" called the umpire, and Joe looked disappointed. He had hoped it would be a strike.

"Put in another pitcher!" yelled some of the Hillside team.

"Don't mind them!" advised Bert as he tossed the ball back to Joe.

"I don't," was the answer, and for his next delivery Joe was very careful. But his heart, as well as that of every other member of the team, felt like lead when Sid stepped forward a little and hit the ball with all his might.

Away it sailed up into the air, out toward first base. For a moment it seemed that it would be a foul ball, but the umpire called "fair!" and Sid dropped his bat and ran.

But Jimmy Bigfish was not on first base for nothing. Like an arrow he darted out into the diamond and before Sid could reach the

base the Indian lad had caught the ball. Sid was out amid a riot of cheers from the friends of the Montrose team.

"Good work, Jimmy!" called Bert.

"Now if I can strike out the next two and if we can get even one run, we'll win the game," thought Joe.

He did manage to strike out the next man, but the third one up was a good hitter and knocked a two-bagger. Then came Ralph North, captain of the Hillside team, to bat.

"Here's where we win the game!" he boasted as he swung the stick. If Ralph could knock another two-bagger it would bring in the man on second with a run which might win the game that was still a tie.

Ralph did hit the ball, sending it out toward center field, and Jerry Larth, the lad on second, started for third and home. It began to look bad for the Montrose team.

But Charlie Mason was covering center field and when he saw the ball coming toward him he raced to get under it. For a time it seemed as if the ball never would get down, but at last it fell toward Charlie's outstretched hands.

"I hope he doesn't muff it!" murmured Bert as he watched with anxious eyes Jerry racing toward the home plate.

There was a thud as the ball landed in Charlie's glove and he held on to it.

"Out!" cried the umpire, and though Jerry was almost at home plate his effort did not count, for there were now three out and the Hillside nine had lost its last chance unless Montrose could not make the deciding run, in which case the game, still a tie, would go to ten innings or more.

"Now, fellows," said Bert as he gathered his schoolmates around him, when their turn to bat came, "we've got to play harder than we ever did before. What we need is a run!"

"Knock a homer and we'll have it," said John Marsh, with a smile.

"I'll do my best when my turn comes," Bert promised. "But Jimmy Bigfish is up first. Then comes Danny Rugg and I'm next."

"All right, Jimmy, then you knock a home run!" begged John.

"I'll try," was all the Indian lad said, but there was a determined look on his face as he stepped out into the batter's box.

The Hillside pitcher fooled Jimmy with the first ball, curving it skillfully, and the Indian had one strike against him. He knocked a foul on his second attempt. Then came two balls and some one shouted:

"He's afraid of you, Jimmy! He'll walk you!"

But Jimmy saw that the next ball was a good one, and he knocked it so far that he got to first base before it was recovered.

"Now, Danny, it's up to you," said Bert as Danny Rugg took his place. "Bring Jimmy in!"

"I'll do my best, Bert!"

But Danny's best was not very good, for he struck out. And the Hillside pitcher and basemen watched Jimmy so closely that he had no chance to steal second and so get nearer home.

It came Bert's turn to bat and his heart was beating fast. The game now depended on him. If he could only knock a two or three-bagger he would bring in Jimmy Bigfish, which would mean that Montrose would win the game.

"If I can only hit it!" murmured Bert.

The first ball he let go by, though the umpire called it a strike. The next two were balls, and Bert struck at the one that followed, popping up a little foul which the catcher almost had. If he had caught it Bert would have been out.

"Well, I have one chance left!" he thought as he tapped the bat on home plate and watched the Hillside pitcher.

In came the ball. It was just the kind Bert had been hoping for and he struck at it with all his might. How his heart thrilled as he felt the bat meet the ball squarely! Away the ball sailed, out toward the center fielder, on and on.

"Run, Jimmy! Run!" shouted the crowd.

And Jimmy ran as he had never run before! He had a glimpse of Bert speeding toward second base. The fielder had not yet got the ball. There was a good chance now.

"Run, Bert! Run! Make an extra one for luck!" yelled some boy.

Past second speeded Bert, and he was glad to see that Jimmy was now home with the

winning run. The team was safe. But Bert, for his own honor, wanted to add another tally.

He did. Just a second before the Hillside catcher caught the ball which was relayed in from second base, Bert slid over home plate with one run more than was needed to make his team a winner. If he had not knocked that home run the Hillside School might have got a chance for another inning and have beaten. But Bert saved the day and his schoolmates rushed up to him, shouting, yelling and cheering with glee.

Jimmy Bigfish also received his share of praise. For if he had not knocked the one-bagger, giving Bert a chance to bring him in, the story might have had a different ending. And Jimmy's dash from first to home plate had been wonderful.

So the Indian boy, as well as Bert Bobbsey, shared in the honors of the winning team, and some lads who had so far rather held off from making friends with the Indian, on account of his race, were now among those who patted him on the back.

"I'm glad we have you on our team," said

Bert, when the game was over. For though the Montrose team was not yet out there was no need of playing further, now that the game was won.

"I'm glad to be on it," said Jimmy, modestly enough. "It was a great game."

"Oh, Bert! I'm so glad you won!" exclaimed Nan as she went over toward her brother.

"I'm glad, too!" panted Bert.

"So am I!" echoed Shine Bigfish, who had come to the game with Nan. The two were good friends and once Shine had stayed all night at Nan's house, having come to practice her Indian song for Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Well, your brother helped," said Bert, clapping Jimmy on the back. "He and our mascot, Freddie, brought good luck. Where are Freddie and Flossie?" he asked Nan.

"Why, I thought they were right here with me," was Nan's puzzled answer. "I got up to come over where you were and I thought they followed me."

"I guess they didn't, though," remarked Bert. "They're with some of the others, I suppose."

But when he and Nan looked around for the small twins they were not in sight. At first Bert and his sister were not alarmed. But when most of the crowd had hurried away from the ball field and Flossie and Freddie were not seen anywhere, then Nan got a little pale and she murmured:

"I wonder where they can be?"

"Maybe they went home," suggested Sunshine.

"No, they wouldn't go without Bert or me," Nan replied. "Oh, Bert, I'm afraid they're lost again!"

"It looks so," was his answer. "But I'll have some of the fellows look around for them. Hi, Danny! Charlie!" he called, "have you seen Flossie and Freddie since the game?"

"I haven't," Danny answered.

Nor had Charlie or any of the other players still remaining to gather up their bats, gloves and balls.

"Oh, where can those twins have gone to?" murmured Nan, who was now more than ever alarmed.

"Do they get lost often?" asked Jimmy Bigfish, who had been helping look around the

grounds and in the grove of trees near by for the missing twins.

"Oh, yes, often," answered Bert. "But nearly always they start out from home and we know about where to look for them. This time there's no telling which way they went."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Nan again.

"Never mind," consoled Sunshine, "Jimmy and I will help you look for them. Maybe they went home," suggested the Indian girl again.

Bert shook his head.

"I don't believe so," he said. "I guess they're lost all right."

CHAPTER XIV

A STRANGE RIDE

FREDDIE BOBBSEY and his sister Flossie had jumped up with Nan and others in the crowd when shouts and cheers greeted the winning of the game.

"Hurray! Hurray!" cried Freddie, capering about and clapping his hands.

"Hurray! Hurray!" echoed Flossie. She could not clap her hands as her doll, Arabella Jones, was under one arm. But Flossie could shout, and she did. However, she did not know quite what it was all about, so she asked Freddie: "What makes everybody so happy?"

"It's 'cause Bert's team won the game," Freddie answered.

The crowd was moving about, many starting for home, and Flossie and Freddie had lost sight of Nan who had jumped up to go tell

Bert how glad she was. She thought the small twins would follow her. But they did not.

"Well, I guess we'll go home next," said Freddie. "There won't be any more baseball to-day. Bert's team won."

For a moment the little twins were left alone as the crowd surged away from them, for many were anxious to get home quickly.

As for Flossie and Freddie, they were never anxious to go away from a good time. Home was the last thing they thought of.

So when Freddie looked across the lot and saw, drawn up on one side of the road, a large auto bus, he said to Flossie:

"Let's go over and get in that."

"In what?" asked the little girl.

"In that bus. Maybe it will take us home after a while."

"A bus can't take us home," objected Flossie, with a laugh.

"I mean the man who drives it can," said her brother. "I guess maybe that's the bus Bert and the fellows rode in," for the two teams had come to the ball grounds in auto stages like those used for the church picnic.

"If we get in now," went on Freddie, "Bert will let us ride home after a while, 'cause it's too early to go home yet."

"Maybe it is," agreed Flossie, "but I'm hungry. So is Arabella Jones," and she looked at her doll.

"I have two cookies," stated Freddie, bringing them, rather moist and sticky, from his pocket. "That's one for me and one for you," he went on.

"Oh, I know what we can do, Freddie!" cried Flossie as they drew near the stage and saw that it was empty.

"What?" he asked.

"We can have a play party with the cookies in the stage! I'll pretend Arabella is company."

"All right," agreed the little boy. "We'll play in the stage and when Bert and the fellows come to ride home we'll ride with them."

"That'll be fun," agreed Flossie.

They were now off by themselves, crossing the lot toward the stage which stood alone at the side of the road. There was no driver on the seat and no one in the big bus. At the rear were some steps and after Freddie had

helped Flossie up them he scrambled up himself.

"Oh, isn't it nice in here!" murmured Flossie. "It's got soft leather seats and everything!"

"Yes," agreed her brother. "We can have fun here."

The little twins climbed up on the seats, sitting on the shady side, and Freddie gave Flossie one of the molasses cookies. She broke off some and pretended to feed bits to Arabella. But a close watcher would have seen that Flossie really ate the bits herself.

"I should think Bert and the fellows would come pretty soon and ride home," remarked Flossie, after a while.

"Oh, they'll come pretty soon," said Freddie. "You can lie down on these seats if you want to. They're nice and soft."

"I guess I will," Flossie answered. "Arabella wants a nap. She had to stay awake to watch the ball game. Go to sleep, my dear," she crooned to the doll, putting her down in a corner. Arabella closed her eyes, as all good dolls do.

Then, pretty soon, Flossie closed her eyes.

and she did not open them again right away.

It was still and quiet in the bus. The little twins had been sitting in the warm sun watching the game. Now they were resting in the shade. Freddie looked over and, seeing Flossie with her eyes closed, he closed his own.

"I'll open my eyes when Bert and the fellows come in to ride home," thought Freddie to himself.

But, before he knew it, he was fast asleep.

So was Flossie.

So was Arabella Jones.

It was a little while after this that a man, carrying something shining in his hands, walked down the road toward the bus. He said to himself:

"Well, now I can fix it so we can run along."

The man was the driver of the bus the engine of which had broken down and he had left his car beside the road while he walked back to a garage to get a new piece of the broken one in the motor.

It did not take the man long to put the new piece of machinery in the engine. Then he climbed up on his seat, stepped on the self-

starter and the motor hummed with a throbbing roar.

But it did not wake up Freddie Bobbsey nor his sister Flossie nor Arabella Jones. They lay on the cushions in the big bus, not knowing anything of what was going on.

"Now I'm all right!" said the man. "I can travel on, now!"

He was thinking so much about the engine he had fixed and about making up for lost time, that he never looked behind him in the bus to see if he had any passengers. He thought the bus was as empty as when he had left it to go for a new part for the engine.

So, without being awakened, Freddie and Flossie were being given a strange ride. Down the road gently rolled the big bus, and the way was so smooth that the twins were not awakened. Neither was Arabella Jones.

Up on his high seat the driver of the auto bus was singing a song. It was something about a hoptoad who lived under a mushroom and never minded the rain for the mushroom was like an umbrella. The man was feeling happy, for he was on his way home after his day's work and his auto was running well.

It had not been broken as much as he had feared at first. So the man sang happily.

For several miles he drove on, singing, turning this way and that along the road, and at last he left the smooth highway and was on a rougher one, with many bumps.

The jolting of the bus awakened Freddie, and he cried out in surprise when he noticed the auto going along and saw no one in it but himself, Flossie and Arabella.

Freddie's cry of surprise awakened Flossie. But Arabella Jones kept her eyes shut, for she was still lying on her back.

"What's the matter, Freddie?" called his sister.

"I don't know," he answered. "But I guess we're having a ride."

"It's a funny ride!" exclaimed Flossie, "with nobody but us and Arabella Jones! Whoa! Stop! I want to get out!" she suddenly yelled as she saw the back of the singing driver on the seat. "Stop! Freddie and I want to get down and go home!"

CHAPTER XV

AN ANXIOUS SEARCH

FLOSSIE BOBBSEY was so anxious to get out of the bus that she might have jumped off while it was going had not Freddie caught hold of her dress and held her.

"Wait a minute!" he exclaimed.

"But I want to get off!" insisted Flossie. "Arabella Jones and I want to get off. We've been asleep and we've had a ride and I want to go home."

"So do I," said Freddie. "But mother told us never to jump out of an auto while it was moving."

"Then tell the man to stop!" cried Flossie. Raising her voice she called: "Stop, mister! Stop! We want to get out!"

The driver was still singing away heartily and his bus was making quite a noise, but he heard Flossie's shrill cries and, looking back

and seeing the children, he showed much surprise.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "Where did you come from?" and he steered the big auto over to the side of the road and put on the brakes. "I didn't know I had any passengers," the bus driver went on. "There weren't any in my machine when I went back to get a new part for my broken engine."

"We climbed in after the ball game," explained Freddie.

"And we went to sleep, so did Arabella Jones—my doll," added Flossie.

"Oh, yes, I remember now! I stopped my bus near where some boys were playing ball," said the man. "So you climbed in while I was away, did you? Well, where do you want to go now?"

"Home!" said Flossie and Freddie in the same breath.

"Home, is it?" asked the driver. "Well, I'm late now and I've got to take a party out this evening. If I let you down here do you s'pose you could find your way home? I'd drive you, but I'm late. Do you think you can find your way home?"

Flossie and Freddie looked along the road. At first they did not know where they were nor in which direction their home lay. But, all of a sudden, Freddie caught sight of a clump of trees. He thought he knew them, but, as he found out afterward, he was mistaken.

"Yes, mister," he said to the bus driver, "we know our way home from here. Those trees are near the ball ground and it isn't very far from there to our house."

"I'm glad of that," the driver said, "for it would take me out of my way to drive you back. But if you are sure you can find your way I'll help you down."

"Oh, yes, we can find our way all right," said Flossie.

The man helped her and Freddie down out of the high bus and the two children started off, Flossie carrying her doll. They walked back along the dusty road toward the patch of woods which Freddie thought he knew.

But, as it happened, Freddie was mistaken. Flossie and he had been asleep in the bus longer than they knew and the driver, not knowing he had passengers, had driven quite

a distance from the ball field before Flossie's shrill cries stopped him. So the little twins were let out of the bus rather a longer way from home than they had been, all by themselves, in many a month.

However, they did not know this. They thought they would only have to walk through the woods and take a path that would lead them home.

The bus driver remained for a moment looking after the two little children trudging along. Then, shaking his head rather doubtfully, he remarked:

"I hope those two know where they are going. If they weren't so sure that they were close to home I'd take them back, late as I am. But they seem to know how to take care of themselves. I guess they'll be all right."

For a time Flossie and Freddie Bobbsey were not in any trouble. They walked along, feeling quite rested after their ride and sleep.

But after they had left the highway and were walking along a path under the trees for a while, and when it began to get dark, Flossie came to a sudden stop near some bushes.

"What's the matter?" asked Freddie. "Are you tired?"

"No, I'm not zackly tired," sighed Flossie. "But I wish I was home and so does Arabella Jones. Do you think this is the right way to go home, Freddie?"

"Sure, it is!" he answered. "It's only a little way now."

But when he and his sister had walked on for five minutes more and it was getting darker and they did not come within sight of their house, Flossie stopped again and said:

"I don't think we're going the right way, Freddie."

"Why not?" he asked.

"'Cause I don't see anything in these woods like our woods. There's no rock like a castle and there's no tree like an elephant."

Freddie and Flossie had often taken walks with their father in the woods near their home, and in his jolly way Mr. Bobbsey had pointed out a rock that he said looked like a fairy castle and a tree which resembled an elephant's head. Freddie and Flossie always remembered these and always looked for them

when in those woods. Now they saw nothing of the queer landmarks.

"Where is the rock castle?" asked Flossie, staring around.

"I don't know," her brother replied.

"And where is the elephant tree?"

"I don't know that, either," Freddie had to say.

"Then," said Flossie, sitting down on a flat stump and taking Arabella Jones in her lap, "we're lost, I guess."

"I guess so, too," admitted Freddie, with a sigh. "I thought we could take a short cut through the woods, but I guess these are the wrong woods."

"I'm tired," sighed Flossie.

"Well, we'll rest and then we'll walk on," decided Freddie. "It's getting dark."

"Terribly dark," agreed Flossie. But she was not yet very much alarmed. It was not the first time she and her brother had been lost. Up to now they had always been found, sooner or later, and they knew that, in time, some one would find them.

So they sat down on the stump, two rather forlorn little twins, waiting to get rested be-

fore keeping on in their vain search for home.

Meanwhile, back at the ball ground, Bert, Nan and several of their friends had been anxiously searching for the missing twins. At first Bert thought Flossie and Freddie might have wandered off in company with some of their playmates. But he and Nan hurried after several groups, only to find that these children had not seen the lost ones.

"They must have gone home," said Jimmy Bigfish who, with his sister, was helping in the search.

"They wouldn't know the way, I don't believe," answered Bert.

"Shine and I could go home and see," offered Nan. "If they weren't there we could come back and tell you."

"Mother will worry if we go home without Flossie and Freddie," objected Bert.

"She'll worry, anyhow, if we don't come home pretty soon with them," said Nan. "I'd better go and find out."

"I think that's a good idea," said the Indian lad. "You and I can scout around here for a while, Bert."

"All right! Do that, Nan! I hope noth-

ing has happened," said Bert, who was beginning to feel alarmed.

The stage which had carried Bert and his nine to the grounds was now loaded with players and ready to go back into Lakeport. There were calls for the captain.

"I can't ride back with you," Bert explained to his friends. "My little brother and sister are lost, and I've got to look for them. But you can take Nan and Sunshine to our house to see if Flossie and Freddie are there. They might have ridden home in some auto."

"I'll take the girls," offered the driver of the auto stage. "And I'll come back this way, Bert, and let you know what has happened. If the little ones aren't home I'll bring your folks back here to help hunt for them. Though maybe you'll find them by that time."

"Maybe. I hope so," said Bert.

So Nan and Shine rode back in the auto stage with the victorious nine—that is, all but Bert. One after another of the boys was let off near his house so that when the stage reached the Bobbsey home the two girls were the only passengers.

Dinah, the colored maid who had been in the Bobbsey family for as long as Nan could remember, came waddling to the gate as the stage drew up.

"Heah comes mah honey lambs!" exclaimed the cook as she saw the stage. She always called Flossie and Freddie her "honey lambs." But when she saw only Nan and the Indian girl getting out she looked puzzled.

"Whar am mah honey lambs?" she asked. "An' where is Bert? Did he win de ball game?"

"Yes, Dinah," answered Nan with a sinking heart, "Bert's team won. But Flossie and Freddie wandered away. Did they come home?"

"Why, no, chile, dey ain't heah! Oh, mah honey lambs, whar is yo'?" and Dinah began to get excited.

"They're just lost for a little while," said Shine. "No harm has come to them, I'm sure. We'll go back now, and help Bert and my brother look for them."

"Where are mother and daddy?" asked Nan. "They ought to be told. They may want to go back with us."

"Yo' ma an' pa done gone over to Mr. Blackstone's house fo' supper," explained Dinah. "Dey tole me to tell you dat when you-all got home. But I didn't spect Flossie an' Freddie wouldn't come wif you! Oh, mah good lan' ob massy!" and Dinah clasped her hands in worriment. "Whar am mah honey iamb?"

"You can telephone your father and mother, can't you, Nan?" suggested Sunshine. "Tell them the twins are missing."

"There may be no need of worrying them that way," said Nan, after a moment of thought. "No, I think you and I had better go back where Bert and Jimmy are, Shine, and tell the boys that Flossie and Freddie aren't home. Then we can help look for them."

"I'll run you back," offered the bus driver kindly.

"An' I'll go 'long!" declared Dinah.

"No," decided Nan, "you had better stay here in case some one finds Flossie and Freddie wandering around and brings them home before we get back. You ought to stay, Dinah."

"Yes, I spects I had," the colored cook agreed. "But if dat lazy Sam ob mine was heah I'd send him wif you. But he ain't back from fishin' yet."

Nan and Shine were very anxious as the stage bore them back to the ball field. It was getting late now. They found Bert and Jimmy there, and the boys seemed tired.

"They weren't at home!" called Nan to her brother.

"And we haven't found them," Bert added.

The four children stood there, and the driver of the bus that had brought Nan and Shine back was about to ask if he could do anything else for them when a man, walking along the road, asked:

"Are you looking for two little children?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Nan, eagerly. "A girl and a boy—twins!"

"Have you seen them?" asked Bert.

"Oh, I do hope you have!" cried Nan, too excited to await quietly the answer to Bert's question. "They're so little to be off like this all alone! Oh, I hope you did see Flossie and Fr——"

"Let the man do the talking, Nan," inter-

rupted Bert, but not speaking impatiently, for he knew how worried Nan was.

"I saw two such children get in a bus that was standing at the side of the road about the time the ball game ended," said the man. "There was no one in the bus but those two—right cute little kids they were."

"Oh, that was Flossie and Freddie!" cried Nan. "They got into a bus, did they? Where could they have gone? Oh, dear!"

CHAPTER XVI

OVER THE FORD

NAN BOBBSEY was about ready to cry, and Bert, also, was much alarmed over the missing twins. He thought, too, his father and mother might think it was his fault or Nan's that Flossie and Freddie had not been looked after more carefully.

"Now don't worry," said the man who had mentioned having seen the younger twins get into the bus. "I'm sure you'll find them all right. They just went for a ride, as any child might do, and maybe they went farther than they meant to."

"Yes, but where did they go?" gasped Nan. "What bus was it? There were only two here, this one," and she nodded toward the one in which Bert's team had come to the grounds, "and the one the Hillside boys came

in. Flossie and Freddie didn't get in either of those buses."

"Yes, there was a third bus," said the man who had given the information. "There was another bus drawn up alongside the road here. It had a breakdown, I guess, for I saw the driver walking back toward the town. It was after that that I saw the two little kids climb up in. At first I thought maybe they were the driver's children. But I didn't pay much more attention, only I noticed, after a while, that the man got his broken engine fixed and away he drove. I guess the children stayed in."

"Very likely," agreed Bert. "But they wouldn't go off with a strange man."

"Not unless they'd fallen asleep," said Jimmy Bigfish, and, without knowing it, he had hit on exactly what had happened.

"If we could only find out what bus it was!" said Sunshine, "we could follow it."

"Well, I couldn't tell you that," said the man who had told about seeing Flossie and Freddie. "All I know is that it was a green bus and it had the number forty-two painted on the side."

"Forty-two!" exclaimed the driver of the baseball-nine auto. "Why, I know that machine! It is a jitney bus owned by Jake Doltittle and he runs a route between Palmyra and Pompey. He comes this way on his route. And he must have laid over here to fix his engine. It was then the children got in."

"That's the way of it, I'm sure," said the other man.

"Then all we have to do," decided Jimmy, "is to go to Palmyra or Pompey and find the bus and we'll have Flossie and Freddie."

"Which way did Jake drive after he got his machine fixed?" asked Ted Northrup, the driver of the bus in which the Montrose school nine had ridden.

"He was heading for Pompey when I saw him start off," the other man answered.

"Then come on," invited Mr. Northrup to Bert, Nan, and the two Indians. "I'll drive you folks to Pompey. Jake lays over there to get his supper before he starts out on his night work. We'll find your little twins there, I'm sure."

"Thank you ever so much," called Nan to the strange man as she and the other three

children climbed back in the bus again and started off. "I guess we'll find them now."

"I hope so," he answered, with a wave of his hand.

It was getting dusk as the bus rumbled along the dusty road, and Nan was thinking how frightened Flossie and Freddie might be when darkness came and they were far from home.

As it happened, they did not have to go all the way to Pompey, which was five miles farther on, before discovering a trace of Flossie and Freddie. Just as the last of the sunset glow was fading from the sky Jimmy, who was looking out of the bus window as it passed a path that led into the woods, saw something that made him call out:

"Wait a minute!"

"Have you found them?" asked Nan eagerly.

"No, but they've been along here," said Jimmy. "Look," he went on as Mr. Northrup stopped his machine, "there's Flossie's doll's shawl caught on a briar bush!"

Jimmy was out on the road the next instant and had plucked from the bush a square patch

of light cloth which Flossie used as a shawl for Arabella Jones.

"That means Flossie and Freddie have been along here!" cried Bert.

"But they must have been walking for the little shawl to get caught on the bush," said Nan, examining the cloth and making sure it belonged to Arabella. "I thought they were in a bus."

"They got out here!" exclaimed the Indian lad, looking closely at the dust in the road in the light of the auto lamps which revealed some small footprints. "See! They walked along here and struck into the woods. I can see their trail plainly."

"You've got sharp eyes, my boy!" said the bus driver.

"I got them from my Indian father, I guess," said Jimmy. "But almost anybody could pick up this trail," and it was plain when he pointed it out. Flossie and Freddie had, indeed, walked that way.

"But why did they jump out of the bus?" asked Nan. "Maybe they got hurt."

"They didn't jump out," said Mr. Northrup, who had backed his machine up so the

light of the lamps illuminated the road at the point where the path through the woods branched off from it. "I think this is what happened. Those children must have been asleep in the bus and Jake didn't know about them until he had given them quite a ride. Then they either begged to be let out or he set them down here, and they started off through the woods."

"Then we're on the right trail!" exclaimed Jimmy Bigfish. "We only have to follow it to find Flossie and Freddie."

"But it's getting dark fast!" sighed Nan.

"Then we must hurry!" urged Sunshine.

"I'd go with you, only I can't drive my bus through the woods," offered Mr. Northrup. "But I'll do anything I can to help."

"If you would drive back to our house and let Dinah know we are on the trail of the twins, it would be a good thing," said Bert. "We can follow them through the woods, and soon find them, I guess."

"Shall I come back here and get you?" the bus driver inquired.

"I know a short cut through these woods,"

Jimmy said. "If we find Flossie and Freddie, and I'm sure we shall, I can take them home that way."

"All right, then I'll go let Miss Dinah know everything is coming out all right," Mr. Northrup said. "And here—you'd better take my flashlight," he added, handing out a powerful one from a box under his seat. "It may come in useful."

"Yes, it will," said Jimmy. "Thank you."

So the older Bobbsey twins and the two Indian children started into the woods on the trail of Flossie and Freddie while the driver turned around to go back to Lakeport to relieve the mind of Dinah and also to inform Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey, in case they should have returned home from visiting their friends.

Jimmy led the way, flashing the light on the path, and because of his sharp eyes he could see several places in the dust where Flossie and Freddie had trudged along. It did not take him long to reach, with Bert, Nan and Sunshine, the stump where the two tired twins had sat down to rest. The grass around the

stump was trampled down and there were several toadstools broken off where Freddie had kicked them.

"But where are they now?" half sobbed Nan, for it was getting very dark.

"We'll find them!" said Jimmy.

"Hark!" suddenly whispered Bert.

Through the woods came the sound of a child sobbing and another voice calling:

"Daddy! Mother! Where are you?"

"There they are!" shouted Nan. "Flossie! Freddie! Here we are!"

"Oh! Oh! I'm so glad," came in Flossie's voice. "Oh, Nan, we're lost!"

"We aren't lost any more!" Freddie's voice exclaimed.

A few moments later, following the rays of the flashlight in Jimmy's hand, the lost twins were with their brother and sister.

"Oh, what happened to you?" cried Nan, her arms around Flossie.

"We just went for a ride and fell asleep in the bus," explained Freddie. "And we thought we could walk home, but we couldn't."

"No, you'd have hard work following the

short-cut trail through these woods," said Jimmy. "But I can show you the way."

He started off, the flashlight giving a fine illumination along the dark path, and the others followed. They were no longer worried or afraid, though Flossie and Freddie were tired and hungry.

"We'll soon have you home," promised Sunshine.

But a little later when they came to a deep, wide creek in the middle of the woods, with no boat or bridge in sight, even Bert thought it would be a long way around to get home.

"No, there's a ford I can take you over," said Jimmy.

"What's a ford?" sleepily asked Freddie.

"It's a place where the water isn't deep and where we can wade across on stones," the Indian boy said.

"Oh, that'll be fun!" cried Flossie, brightening up at this news. "I'll take off my shoes and stockings."

"Can you find the ford in the dark?" asked Bert in a low voice.

"Oh, sure!" answered the Indian lad. "Besides, I have this flashlight. Come on!"

A little later he had led the others down the creek to a place where it was not so deep. In the rays of the flashlight could be seen the ford, a number of big stones so placed that one could step from one to the other and so get across.

"You don't even have to wade," said Jimmy. "But maybe we'd better go barefooted in case any of us should slip."

"This is fun!" cried Freddie, tugging at his shoes and no longer remembering that he was tired and hungry.

The children were soon crossing over the ford.

CHAPTER XVII

THE TRAP

LUCKY it was that Flossie and Freddie had taken off their shoes and stockings, for in stepping on to the first slippery, moss-covered stone of the ford both small twins toppled off and went, splash, into the water up above their ankles. But they only laughed. For it wasn't at all deep, and they said the cool water felt good on their toes.

Bert and the others managed to cross without accident, under the skillful leadership of the Indian lad. Later Bert learned that the ford was rather a dangerous one, especially in high water. But Jimmy Bigfish took his charges over at the right place, and nothing happened.

"We must hurry home now," said Nan, as they sat down on the grassy bank across the brook to dry their feet.

It took a little time, especially for tired and sleepy Freddie and Flossie, to get their shoes and stockings on their damp feet, but at last they were all ready to hurry on again along the short cut Jimmy knew through the woods.

"Won't your aunt be worried about you?" asked Nan as they trudged on.

"Not very much, I guess," Shine answered. "She knows we can look out for ourselves, and we have been in the woods after dark many times. But we'll soon be home now."

The Indians' aunt had taken a cottage not far from where the Bobbsey twins lived and, thinking over what Jimmy had done that day, in helping win the game and in finding the little twins, Bert Bobbsey was very glad the Indian lad lived so near.

"He and I are going to be good chums," said Bert to himself.

They were almost out of the woods when Nan gave a little scream as she heard a rustling in the bushes and, as she pointed to some spots of glowing, green fire in the blackness of some bushes, she cried:

"Oh, look! It's a wolf!"

"It's only a fox, I guess, or maybe a stray

dog!" said Jimmy, as he flashed his light on the bushes. The two green spots, which were the eyes of some animal, slunk out of sight.

"Was it a fox, do you think?" asked Bert when Freddie and Flossie had been held back from plunging into the shrubbery to catch the stray animal.

"It might easily be," was the Indian's answer. "There are some foxes in these woods. But of course it might have been a dog or a cat."

There was no further adventure in the woods and, a little later, Jimmy led his friends out on one of the back streets of the town and soon the Bobbsey twins were safe at home.

"Oh, I've been so worried about you!" cried Mrs. Bobbsey who, with her husband, had only just come back from their visit. Dinah had told them about the missing twins and the search.

"Jimmy found us all right!" stated Freddie. "Now can we have some supper?"

"I'm starved!" announced Flossie.

"I think you must all be! Yes, of course Jimmy and his sister must stay and eat with

us," said Mrs. Bobbsey in answer to Nan's whisper. "I don't know how to thank him for what he did. I came back to find Dinah all excited and——"

"Guess I was 'cited!" exclaimed the fat cook. "I done t'ought mah honey lambs was nebber comin' home—nebber!" and she hugged the small twins eagerly.

There was a telephone in the cottage that Mrs. Carwith had hired, so Jimmy and Sunshine could live in Lakeport while attending school, and the aunt of the Indian children was soon informed over the wire where her niece and nephew were. She said it would be all right for them to stay with the Bobbseys for supper.

After the meal, which was bountiful and as good as Dinah could make it, Jimmy and Bert talked over the high spots of the game, while Nan and Sunshine conversed on other matters. Flossie and Freddie went up to bed almost as soon as they had eaten.

As Bert had predicted, there was considerable talk among his schoolmates next day, not **only** about how the Indian lad had helped win

the ball game but about how he had found the missing twins. So Jimmy was more in favor among the lads of Montrose school. Nan hoped that the girls would be more kind toward Shine, but though some were, others still held off, saying, in sneering tones, they did not want to "associate with a half Indian girl." Luckily Shine did not hear these unkind words.

It was a few days after Flossie and Freddie had been lost that, when the baseball practice was over one afternoon, Bert said to Jimmy:

"Do you really think there was a fox in the woods near the ford?"

"I think there might be," answered the Indian boy.

"How could we catch him?" Bert went on. "I'd like to tame a fox."

"We might catch him in a trap," said Jimmy.

"Could we?" eagerly cried Bert. "Do you know how to make a trap that would catch a fox without hurting him?"

"Sure I do. My father showed me."

"Then come on—let's do it!" begged Bert. "We won't say anything about it to the other fellows, though."

"No, we'd better not," agreed Jimmy.

Bert Bobbsey was eagerly excited as, next day, he and Jimmy began to make the trap.

"I'm glad I got to know Jimmy Bigfish," said Bert to himself.

On his part, Jimmy was glad to have Bert for a friend.

CHAPTER XVIII

QUEER GAME

FREDDIE BOBBSEY walked on tiptoe toward the woodshed in which he could hear the sound of pounding.

"Where you going?" asked Flossie, who was putting a clean dress on Arabella Jones. She watched her brother from the side porch.

Freddie did not answer. Instead, he put one finger over his lips as he had seen his teacher do in school when she wanted the children to be quiet and not even whisper.

"Oh!" exclaimed Flossie in lower tones. "Is there something in the woodshed, Freddie?"

Once more came the sound of hammering and pounding. Flossie laid aside her doll, leaving Arabella half dressed. She was as eager and curious as her brother. The small

twins had come home from school a little while before. So had the older twins, and with Bert was Jimmy Bigfish.

"Aren't you going to practice baseball to-day, Bert?" asked Nan, who came in soon after her brother and the Indian boy had reached the Bobbsey home.

"No practice to-day," was Bert's answer. "Jimmy and I have something else to do."

With that he and Jimmy had hurried into the woodshed, and now from it came those hammering sounds.

"What is it?" whispered Flossie, joining Freddie in the tiptoe walk toward the out-building.

"I don't know," the small boy replied. "But Jimmy and Bert are doing something and I want to see what it is."

"So do I!" chimed in Flossie.

"They're making something," went on Freddie. "I guess they don't want me to see what it is. But I'm going to."

"So'm I," announced Flossie.

"But we mustn't make a noise," cautioned her brother, "else they won't let us look and then we won't see what it is."

"No, we mustn't make a noise," agreed Flossie.

It was not the first time the small twins had made a cautious approach toward something begun by Nan or Bert, and Flossie and Freddie knew just how to walk softly and slowly, making no noise. Even Jimmy Bigfish, half Indian that he was, could not have walked toward the woodshed much more quietly. But then, of course, the hammering and pounding done by Bert and his dark-faced chum helped to cover the noise which Flossie and Freddie could not help making now and then.

Once Flossie tripped over a piece of wood and fell down, grunting as she did so, for some of her breath was knocked out of her.

"Look out!" warned Freddie.

Freddie was much too curious to find out what was going on inside the woodshed to stop to help Flossie to her feet, so, after that one warning, he tiptoed on again.

Flossie picked herself up, and hurried on to join Freddie, who was, by this time, close to a window from which he could look into the woodshed.

He waited for Flossie to come up to him,

the twins, meanwhile, listening to the hammering and the talk that went on between Bert and Jimmy.

"Is it 'most done now, Jimmy?" Bert asked.

"'Most," answered the Indian boy.

"Oh, they're making something!" Freddie told his little sister in a delighted whisper. "We'll see what it is."

"Maybe it's a baseball," suggested Flossie.

"They don't make baseballs—they have to buy 'em!" said the small boy, with a little laugh at Flossie's ignorance.

"Well, then maybe they're making a big bat so Bert can knock a lot of home runs," Flossie went on.

"They buy bats, too," Freddie said. "This is something different."

When he had found a box on which he could stand to make himself tall enough to look through the woodshed window, he gave a gasp of surprise at what he saw. Bert and Jimmy were working on a queer object, something like a chest with a hinged cover and slats of wood on one side.

"I wonder what it is?" said Freddie to him-

self. Eagerly he looked through the window, and he was so quiet and Bert and Jimmy were so interested in the fox trap they were building that they did not look up and see the small boy.

But Flossie, waiting on the ground near Freddie, who was standing on the box looking through the window, could see nothing. All she could do was to listen to the talk and the pounding going on in the woodshed. At last she grew impatient and said:

"Let me look in, Freddie! What is it?"

Freddie was nearly always kind to his twin sister and played fair with her. So, after he had looked again, and tried, without success, to guess what it was the two boys were making, he moved off the box and helped Flossie to stand up on her tiptoes so she could look through the window.

"But don't make any noise!" Freddie cautioned his small sister. "We don't want them to see us, else they'll make us go away."

"I'll be careful!" Flossie promised. She really intended to be. But the box was uneven, she leaned a little too far, and, all of a sudden, she slipped and fell with a cry of:

"Oh, Freddie, catch me!"

"What's that?" cried Bert in alarm, looking up so quickly that he hit his thumb with the hammer instead of hitting the nail and cried, "Ouch!"

"It was your little sister looking in," Jimmy answered, for his quick eyes had caught a glimpse of Flossie's face before her head vanished from the window.

"Well, if she's there I guess Freddie is, too," said Bert, his pounded thumb in his mouth. "I'll make mother call them away. We don't want them to see what we're making or they might tell some of the others, and then every fellow in school will hear about it and we won't catch anything."

"It would be best to keep it secret," agreed Jimmy.

So Bert, closing the door after him, hurried out of the woodshed, and to all Freddie's pleas that he be allowed to look in, the older brother turned a deaf ear. He picked up Flossie, who was not hurt by her tumble, and carried her into the house. Then he whispered something to his mother, and Mrs. Bobbsey made Freddie come away from the shed, saving that

Bert and Jimmy did not want to be spied upon.

"You and Flossie must keep away," Mrs. Bobbsey warned the small twins, for Bert had told her about the fox trap and about the need of keeping it secret.

All the rest of the afternoon Bert and Jimmy worked in the woodshed, and after dark, when Flossie and Freddie were out of the way, the two boys carried something to the woods, near the ford that had been crossed the time the small twins were lost after their auto stage ride. Here the trap was set.

So many other things came up to take the attention of Flossie and Freddie in the next day or two that they forgot all about the secret of the woodshed. If they saw Bert and Jimmy going off to the woods several times, they did not think to ask the reason.

So it was not until about a week later that Flossie and Freddie again saw the strange object the two boys had been putting together in the woodshed. It happened when Mrs. Bobbsey, one Saturday afternoon, took the small twins on a little woodland picnic and to gather some ferns she wanted for the yard.

The place she chose for this was near the ford.

After enough ferns had been picked, Mrs. Bobbsey sat down near the brook in a shady place to rest, while Flossie and Freddie wandered off, after having promised not to go far.

They had not wandered more than a few hundred feet away from their mother when Freddie, crawling through some bushes, came to a sudden stop and called to Flossie:

"Look here!"

"What is it?" she asked. "More snakes?"

"No. I've found the funny box Jimmy and Bert were making in the woodshed," replied Freddie. "Look! Here it is in the woods!"

Sure enough, there was the box with the hinged door and slats nailed on one side. Within the box were some chicken feathers, though neither Flossie nor Freddie could guess what they were for.

"Now we can see what that box is," said Freddie.

"Yes," agreed Flossie. "Bert can't send us away now."

The small twins walked toward the fox trap, for that is what it was. The box was

quite large—much too big for a small fox, as Jimmy said afterward. So there was plenty of room for Freddie to crawl in through the opening above which was the raised door that was propped up by a stick. That's just what Freddie did—he crawled in to see what those chicken feathers were for.

"Can I come in, too?" asked Flossie, who was standing outside.

"No, it isn't big enough for you until I come out," Freddie answered. "Wait a minute."

He was poking among the chicken feathers, trying to find out what they were there for, when there came a sudden click and, before the little boy could get out, the raised door fell shut and he was caught in the fox trap. Surely, very strange game! Jimmy and Bert never expected to catch anything like that.

For a moment after the door fell Freddie said not a word. But outside the trap stood Flossie. Freddie could see her through the slats, or bars, nailed on the open side of the box.

"Oh!" cried Flossie. "You're caught in a trap, Freddie!"

"Yes, I guess I am," he admitted. "I found out what this box is for—it's a trap."

"You'd better come out!" went on Flossie. "I don't want to go into a trap."

"Yes, I'm coming out!" said Freddie.

But when he tried to push up the hinged door it would not move. It had caught fast on a catch that Jimmy and Bert had made.

Poor Freddie was caught in the box trap as fast as any fox might have been.

CHAPTER XIX

A REAL FOX

"COME on out! Come on out, Freddie!" begged Flossie, when she saw that her little brother was not crawling from the box. "Come on out and let me have a turn!"

"I—I can't!" exclaimed Freddie, again pushing on the door that had dropped down in such a queer way, snapping shut and catching fast. "I can't get out!"

He tried pushing on the slats at one side of the trap, but Jimmy and Bert had made them strong. The Indian boy knew that a fox, though small, is powerful and cunning. He had made the trap well.

"No, I can't get out!" said Freddie, and he began to feel a little frightened.

"I'll go and call mother!" announced Flossie.

"Oh, yes," he begged. "Do that, Flossie," and he did not again try to push on the fallen door or try to break through the strong wooden slats.

Away hurried Flossie to where her mother had finished packing the ferns in moss and damp leaves. Mrs. Bobbsey was just beginning to wonder where the small twins had gone when she saw Flossie hurrying toward her. Something in the look on the little girl's face told her mother that an accident had happened.

"What's the matter?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Oh, Freddie's in a trap!" was the answer.

"A trap? Do you mean he's fallen into the brook or is stuck in the mud or something like that?" asked Flossie's mother. For more than once these things had happened to the small twins.

"Oh, no, Mother! Freddie's in a real trap—the one Bert and Jimmy made in our woodshed. Freddie's in that trap."

Then Mrs. Bobbsey understood, for the boys had told her they were going to set the trap near the ford, hoping to catch a fox.

"Is Freddie hurt?" she asked anxiously, as

she arose to hurry back with the little girl.

"No, he isn't hurt, Mother. He's just inside the trap like a little bear in a circus," and now Flossie laughed as she remembered how funny her brother looked as he peered out at her through the bars.

It did not take Mrs. Bobbsey long to reach the place where Freddie was held prisoner. He was sitting down inside the trap on the pile of chicken feathers, no longer trying to break out, for he felt sure his mother would soon come to him.

"Oh, Freddie, you shouldn't have gone in there!" cried the mother of the twins.

"I—I—now—just wanted to see what it was," Freddie replied. "Please get me out."

This was easier said than done for Jimmy had made the door of the cage to fasten in a peculiar way, to keep the fox secure once he got in, and Mrs. Bobbsey could not find the catch to press on and open it. Nor could she pull apart the wooden slats which were made of hickory sticks. Bert and his Indian chum had spent much time and care on that trap. It was very strong.

"I—I'll never go in a box like this again!"

half sobbed the little boy when he saw that his mother's efforts to set him free were not doing much to get him out. "Shall I have to stay here all night, Mother?" he asked wistfully.

"Oh, no! Of course not! If I can't get this open I can break the slats with a stone. Or I'll go to the nearest farmhouse and ask one of the men to come back with me and take this door off the hinges," for the door that had fallen shut was on hinges.

Mrs. Bobbsey did not want to break the bars with a stone if she could get Freddie out through the door, for she feared some of the wood splinters might scratch him. But when she tried again to open the catch, and could not, she made ready to hasten to a farmhouse, which was some distance away.

All of a sudden, however, Flossie called:

"Somebody's coming!"

"Maybe it's a real fox," suggested Freddie.

"Foxes can't talk," Flossie answered, and then her mother heard, above the noise of feet breaking small twigs and rustling leaves, the sound of voices.

A moment later Bert and Jimmy pushed through the bushes and two very surprised

boys looked at Mrs. Bobbsey, at Flossie and then at Freddie in the trap.

"Why—why—" stammered Bert. "What's the matter?"

"You caught something in your trap you didn't expect to catch," answered Mrs. Bobbsey, with a smile. "Will you please let Freddie out?"

"Oh, sure!" exclaimed the Indian lad.

He knew, of course, just how to work the spring catch of the door, and in a few seconds Freddie could crawl out. Some of the chicken feathers stuck to him.

"It's a good trap, all right," said Bert. "If we caught Freddie we might catch a fox."

"It's a good thing he wasn't hurt," said Jimmy. "But then we made this trap on purpose so it wouldn't hurt anything that was caught in it. How did you find it, Freddie?"

"Oh, Flossie and I just found it—that's all," answered the little fellow. "But some fox must have eaten the chicken you put in for bait, Bert, 'cause there's only feathers left."

"No, we didn't put in a real chicken," ex-

plained Bert. "We just put in some loose feathers."

"We thought a fox might see them and smell them," explained Jimmy, "and he would think it was a real chicken. When he nosed among the feathers the fox would touch the trigger that held the door open and it would fail and catch him."

"That's what happened to me!" exclaimed Freddie. "I put my hand in the feathers and right away the door fell down."

"It's a fine trap!" said Bert. "We'll set it again, Jimmy. But in another place where nobody can find it."

"Oh, I wouldn't bother if I were you," said Mrs. Bobbsey.

But the boys were eager to catch a fox, and after arranging the disturbed feathers and adding a fresh chicken head and feet, to look as much like a chicken as possible, and once more propping up the door and setting the trigger, the trap was placed in another spot.

"Maybe we'll have a real fox to-morrow," said Bert as he and the Indian lad followed Mrs. Bobbsey and the small twins back through the woods.

Flossie and Freddie were warned to keep away from the trap, but it was not likely they would go there again. It was too far for them to wander to without their mother and, now that Mrs. Bobbsey knew where the trap was placed, she said she would keep away from it.

Nan laughed when Freddie told her what had happened to him. Flossie laughed also, after getting home, as she told her father how funny Freddie looked with chicken feathers sticking to him.

For some days the two boys watched their trap carefully. But they caught no fox.

The next week on Wednesday there was a ball game, which Bert's team lost, as the boys on the rival nine were older and had more experience than the lads from Montrose school.

"But we'll win the game Saturday!" Bert declared.

It was so late when the Wednesday's game was finished that Bert and Jimmy had no time to go to the woods to see if they had caught a fox in their trap. But early the next morning, having planned it the evening before, Bert and the Indian lad hurried out to where

the trap had been set the second time. As they approached through the woods they heard a queer barking, yelping sound.

"Oh, Jimmy, I think we've caught something!" cried Bert.

"It sounds so!" agreed the Indian boy.

A moment later they saw the trap and behind the bars a small, reddish animal was moving about, yelping and barking almost like a dog.

"We've caught a fox!" cried Jimmy.

CHAPTER XX

PRACTICE FOR THE SHOW

BERT BOBBSEY could hardly believe it. With a yell of delight, he pushed on past the Indian boy until he had a good look inside the box trap through the bars.

"What luck!" cried Bert. "You said we might catch a fox, Jimmy, but I didn't believe we would after Freddie fell into our trap!"

"Yes, it is good luck," admitted Jimmy.

"I guess the fox went in because I put that fresh chicken head on the chicken feathers," went on Bert, drawing closer to the trap.

The boys could plainly see the small, reddish animal, not unlike a dog except that the tail was extra large—larger even than the tail of a collie or sheep dog. The fox had stopped yelping and had drawn back into the farthest corner of the trap.

From there he looked out with bright, unwinking eyes at the two boys. Doubtless the poor animal's heart was beating fast with fear.

"Yes, I guess it was a good thing you put the chicken head in," said Jimmy. "Maybe the feathers weren't enough to make a fox go inside and spring the trigger."

"Say, he's a fine fox!" went on Bert, as he knelt down to get a better view of the trapped animal. "What'll we do with him?"

"I thought you said you were going to tame him and teach him to do tricks for the Charity Show," said Jimmy, with a smile.

"Yes, that's what I'm going to do," declared Bert. "But I never trained a fox. I wonder how you do it?"

"Same as a dog, maybe," said the Indian lad. "Only a fox is wilder than a dog."

"This one is wild all right!" stated Bert. "Does a fox bite?"

"Sure, they do! I got bit once by one I caught in a trap," the Indian answered.

"Then we have to be careful," declared Bert. "We'll carry this trap, with the fox in it, back to my house and then we'll feed him and be kind to him and he'll get tame and

we can let him out and teach him tricks."

"We might do that," agreed Jimmy. "But we haven't got much time."

"Time for what?"

"Time to tame this fox and teach him tricks. It takes a long time and the show is next week."

"That's right," assented Bert. "Well, we'll take him home in the trap, just the same, and tame him and teach him some tricks ready for some other show."

"Yes, we could do that," agreed the Indian.

As the boys approached closer to the side of the trap where the wooden slats were nailed on, the fox showed more signs of fear. It leaped about from one end of the box to the other and then growled and showed its sharp, white teeth in a snarl.

"I guess he can bite all right!" murmured Bert, drawing away.

"He sure can!" agreed Jimmy Bigfish. "We have to be careful."

There were two loops of rope, for handles, on the sides of the trap. The boys had used these handles by which to carry the box to the woods to set it. Jimmy now cut two long

poles with his knife and, thrusting these poles through the rope loops, he and Bert made ready to carry the box and the fox back to town.

"It will be safe carrying him this way," the Indian lad said. "He can't reach us to bite us."

"He's awful mad!" cried Bert, as the fox leaped about more and snarled again when the poles were being slid through the ropes. "He'd bite us if he could."

It was easy to carry the trapped fox by means of the poles. Bert and Jimmy were walking along the rocky woodland path with their burden, talking of the tricks they would teach their prize when it was tame enough, when, all of a sudden, Bert's foot slipped on a wet place.

"Oh!" he cried.

"Look out!" shouted Jimmy, for Bert, to save himself from falling, let go the poles and thrust out his hands.

In spite of this, Bert toppled down on the rocks and one end of the cage fell heavily. There was a crackling, splintering sound of

breaking wood. There was a flash of something red in the sunshine and the blurr of a rapidly running creature darting for the bushes.

"There he goes!" yelled Jimmy.

"Who?" asked Bert, picking himself up.

"The fox! There he goes! The trap broke and he jumped out!" reported the Indian lad, making a dash after the leaping, red creature.

But there was not much chance of even such a good runner as Jimmy Bigfish catching so swift an animal as a fox; especially a frightened one that had gained its freedom after being shut up in a trap all night. Jimmy knew this before he had run far and he came to a stop.

"Well, he's gone," he said. "Maybe it's just as well."

"Why?" asked Bert, who began to realize that it was his fault, for dropping the cage in his fall, that the fox had gotten away.

"Well," said Jimmy, "I don't believe we ever could have tamed that fox and taught him to do tricks. You have to catch 'em

young when you want to train 'em, and this was an old fox. It's a wonder he ever went into our trap."

"Well, maybe we couldn't have tamed him or taught him tricks," agreed Bert. "But I wish we could have kept him to show my father. He said we'd never catch anything but little boys like Freddie in our trap, and I wanted to show him the fox. But it's too late now. How'd he get out?"

Jimmy was looking at the cage which lay on its side after Bert's slip and fall.

"Some of the wooden slats broke," the Indian lad said. "I guess the fox had gnawed 'em some with his teeth. That's what made 'em thin so they broke easily. That's how he got away," and he showed his chum the gnawed bars. If the boys had been an hour or so later in going to the trap the fox would probably have gnawed his way to freedom before they arrived.

"It's too bad," sighed Bert.

"I guess our fox doesn't think so," said Jimmy, with a laugh. "It was just our luck we caught him, and it was just his luck that he got away."

So the boys made the best of it, and as they did not care to try to trap any more animals, they left the box in the woods.

They had much to talk about as they walked home to get ready to go to school, and they had delayed so long over the fox that they were almost late.

When Bert's schoolmates heard what had happened some said it was all a joke and they hardly believed that a fox had really been caught in the box. But when, after school, they went to the woods and saw the broken and gnawed slats and when Jimmy pointed out to them the marks of the feet of the fox in the soft ground, there was wonder and amazement.

"Don't you want that trap any more?" asked Sammie Todd eagerly.

"No, you may have it," replied Bert.

"I'll fix it and catch that fox again," Sammie declared.

"You haven't a chance in the world!" declared Jimmy Bigfish. "That fox will never come near the trap again, and any other fox will smell where this first one has been and will keep away. Foxes are smart. You can't

catch more than one in the same trap my father used to say."

This success of the Indian lad, even though the fox escaped by reason of Bert's fall, made him new friends, and there were not many among the boys in Bert's school who held back now in playing with Jimmy.

His sister Sunshine, however, did not fare so happily. Aside from Nan and a few of her chums who were taking part in the Charity Show, the Indian girl was rather left to herself. But Nan was firm and loyal and could not understand why the dark skin of Shine should make any difference. However, it seemed to do so.

One afternoon, toward the close of school, the teachers in the various rooms told their pupils:

"There is to be practice for the Charity Show this afternoon. All who are to take part are to remain after class and there will be a rehearsal in the main auditorium.

"Oh, goodie!" whispered Nan to Shine, with whom she now sat. "We can have some fun. I want to hear your Indian song again."

"It's nice of you to say that," replied

Jimmy's sister, with her shy little smile.

There was a flutter of expectation among the other girls who were to have parts in the entertainment and though many of the boys pretended to think it a lot of "bother," and though some of them said they would rather play ball or leap frog than practice, still, even Bert and some of his chums who were loudest in this talk, were a bit puffed up over the fact that they were to appear before a large audience in aid of the poor in the town.

There had been many changes made in the program since the day when the entertainment was first talked of. Some girls and boys had dropped out and others had taken their places. But Sunshine Bigfish was still down on the list as one to sing a solo, while Nan and her schoolmates were to take part in solos, duets and chorus work.

Bert Bobbsey and Jimmy Bigfish were to do what they called a "War Dance," and some of the steps were like those Jimmy said his father had showed him some years ago. Jimmy and Bert had practiced howling, to go with their funny dance, until, at times, Mrs. Bobbsey had to beg them to go out in the

woods to practice rather than in the woodshed.

"I do hope Flossie and Freddie do well," said Nan to Shine as the different ones who were to take part assembled in the big school auditorium.

"Why wouldn't they?" asked the Indian girl.

"Oh, you never can tell what those twins will do," sighed Nan. "They are regular tykes, though Dinah does call them her honey lambs. I just know Flossie will do something to upset matters."

But as the practice went on nothing happened. Sunshine sang her Indian song better than ever, Mrs. Bobbsey and the ladies of the committee said. Nan and her friends also did well, and as for the War Dance of Bert and Jimmy—well, it was a great "hit" Miss Clark said. It was quite funny. So was the frog song of Bert and John Marsh.

"Now, Nan, if you'll get Flossie and Freddie we'll have them practice their song," said Mrs. Bobbsey toward the close of the rehearsal. "Has Flossie her doll and has Freddie his fire engine?" These toys were to be carried by the twins in part of the song.

"I'll see if they have everything, Mother," replied Nan as she hurried to the dressing room where she had left the small twins a short time before.

No sooner had Nan opened the door than, at the sight of her small sister, she uttered a scream, crying:

"Oh, Flossie Bobbsey! What have you done? Oh! Oh!"

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Mrs. Bobbsey, hurrying in.

CHAPTER XXI

ON THE STAGE

FLOSSIE BOBBSEY stood in the middle of the dressing room, while her brother Freddie, who was to have a part with her in one song, was in a corner, working over his beloved toy fire engine. Freddie had insisted that if Flossie used her doll in the song he ought to have his engine. So they let him do this.

But it was not what Freddie was doing nor how Freddie looked that had so startled Nan. It was Flossie's face that had caused Nan to cry out in astonishment, and when Mrs. Bobbsey hurried into the dressing room she, too, was startled.

Flossie's face was streaked with black. It was more than that. It was nearly all black. So were Flossie's hands, and she appeared so queer, standing looking at her mother and

sister with an impish smile on her face that, for a moment, Mrs. Bobbsey could say nothing.

Then Nan found her voice and cried:

"Oh, Flossie Bobbsey! what have you done?"

At the same time Mrs. Bobbsey hurried toward the little twin, caught her up in her arms, and exclaimed:

"Flossie, what is all that black stuff?"

"It's burnt cork," explained Flossie calmly. "Freddie burned it for me on his fire engine and I put the black stuff on my face and hands."

"But what in the world did you do that for?" Mrs. Bobbsey wanted to know. "In the first place, Freddie never should have burned a cork for you. It was dangerous for him to play with matches. He might have started a fire."

"I lit the match and held it and the cork over my fire engine," Freddie said from his corner. "If the match had fallen down it wouldn't have burned the floor 'cause the match would fall on my fire engine and that's iron and can't burn. Flossie wanted me to

burn a cork for her, and I did, but I didn't black her up. She did that herself. I put the cork on a long pin so I wouldn't burn my fingers."

"Oh, you naughty children!" sighed Mrs. Bobbsey. "Why did you do such a thing? And why did you blacken your face and hands with a burned cork, Flossie, when you know you have got to go out now and practice your song with Freddie? Why did you do it?"

"'Cause I want to be black," said Flossie, not smiling now, for she could tell by her mother's voice and by Nan's look that something was wrong.

"Why did you want to be black?" went on Mrs. Bobbsey.

"I wanted to be a Negro minstrel," explained Flossie, almost ready to cry now "Look, I was trying to make myself like that."

She held out the crumpled picture of a Negro minstrel torn from some magazine. Plainly, the picture was that of a white man with blackened face and hands, big red lips, and a large white collar with flaring ends. He held a banjo in one hand.

"Only I haven't got a banjo," went on

Flossie, "and I couldn't find anything red to put on my lips."

"It's a good thing you couldn't," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "But what in the world made you think of a burnt cork?"

"Mr. Kling told us about it," answered Freddie, speaking of the school janitor. "He saw this picture Flossie had and he said once, when he was a little boy, he rubbed burnt cork on his face to make himself black like a Negro. Then Flossie said she wanted to be that and she found a cork and I got a match and burned it for her and she put it on her hands and face, but I didn't."

Flossie had to submit to being washed, and then she and Freddie at last went out on the stage to practice. Flossie had her doll, Arabella Jones, and in the play there was to be on the stage a little fairy doll house. This house was supposed to catch fire (only make believe of course) and Freddie was to come with his engine and put out the blaze. Meanwhile the children would sing a song about a Fat Fairy and a Little Fireman.

This was in keeping with the pet names Mr. Bobbsey used to call his small twins

when they were quite little. Flossie was always the "Fat Fairy" and Freddie the "Little Fireman." They had never gotten over these pet names, and when the Charity Show was talked of Mr. Bobbsey suggested that it would be cute for Flossie and Freddie to have a little act and a song about this. He wrote the words of the song himself and Miss Clark, the teacher, arranged the music.

"But it would all be spoiled if you blacked up like a minstrel," said Mrs. Bobbsey to Flossie after the practice, when Flossie again said she wished she could smear on the burned cork. "The little Fat Fairy in the song is white, not black."

"Well, I s'pose I got to be white then," sighed Flossie.

Aside from this, the practice went along very nicely and many of the boys wished they had parts like Bert and Jimmy who were to do the Indian dance.

"This is the last practice we shall have until the night of the Charity Show," said Mrs. Bobbsey when the rehearsal was over. "Now don't any of you forget what you are to do. Practice by yourselves whenever you can be-

tween now and Friday night. And please come to the theater early."

The owner of one of the moving picture theaters in Lakeport had given the use of his building for the Charity Show and it seemed that every one in town was going.

During the days that followed, the children went through their songs, dances or recitations whenever they could. Bert and his chums even cut short their baseball practice in order to have more time to perfect themselves in their parts.

"I think it will be the nicest show we ever had," said Mrs. Bobbsey to the ladies of her committee.

"Your children are going to do well, I'm sure," said Mrs. Burke.

"And that Indian child—how beautifully she sings," added Mrs. Terrill.

"Yes, Sunshine Bigfish has a lovely voice," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "I am sorry," she added, "that so many of the girls are not friendly with her, just because she is an Indian."

"Perhaps after the entertainment, things will be better," suggested Mrs. Terrill.

As the time for the giving of the show drew

near, Nan Bobbsey was in a flutter of fear, hope, anxiety, and delicious thrills. She hoped she would do well, and she was sure Sunshine would.

"But I'm worried about Flossie and Freddie," she said to Bert.

"What for?" he asked with a laugh.

"Oh, they may do something at the last minute to spoil everything," sighed Nan. "Look how Flossie blacked her face!"

"I'll see that there aren't any corks in the theater dressing room," promised Bert.

The night of the entertainment came at last, and the theater was soon crowded with parents and friends of the children who were to take part. It was a lovely evening, and every ticket had been sold so it was certain a large sum would be taken in to help the poor.

Such a flutter and buzz of excitement as there was in the rooms back of the curtain and in the dressing rooms where the boys and girls were getting ready!

"Where's my dress?"

"Who has my gilt crown?"

"Has anybody seen my sword?"

"Oh, please give me a safety pin, somebody!"

These and many different exclamations could be heard.

Bert, Jimmy and the other boys who had parts were off by themselves. Bert and Jimmy wore Indian costumes, with feathers.

Nan, Shine and several other girls were putting last touches to their dresses. Flossie and Freddie, with the celebrated doll and fire engine, had been given a last looking over by Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Everybody on the stage now for the opening chorus!" suddenly called Mrs. Mortimer, who was in general charge. "Take your places on the stage!"

Back of the curtain, which was down and which concealed the waiting audience, the little performers took their places. Their hearts beat anxiously. Everyone hoped the show would be a success.

"Pull up the curtain!" called Mrs. Mortimer to the man in charge.

What a thrilling time it was!

CHAPTER XXII

AN UNEXPECTED SHOWER

SLOWLY the big asbestos curtain, back of which were arranged the Bobbsey twins and their schoolmates, rose above the stage. For a moment, because of the glare of footlights in their eyes, Bert, Nan and the others saw nothing in front of them but a vast void of blackness, for the lights of the auditorium, where the audience sat, had been turned off the better to bring out the performers on the stage.

Then the children saw looking at them hundreds of white faces with dark spots where the eyes were. It was very strange. But that is how an audience looks to those on a brightly lighted stage.

"Oh, my knees feel so funny!" whispered Nan to Sunshine, who stood next to her. "I know I'm going to forget how to sing!"

"No you aren't," whispered the Indian girl. "You'll be all right!"

Nan was not the only one among the girls who felt nervous when the curtain went up and it was time for the play to start, and some of the boys said, after it was all over, that they felt "kinder funny," as they called it.

But Mrs. Mortimer did not give the children a chance to get "stage fright," as it is called. No sooner had the curtain been pulled up so that all the stage was in plain view of the audience than the music of a piano was heard. Miss Clark, the teacher of Bert and Nan who had helped drill the pupils, was playing the opening chords of the first chorus.

"Ready now!" said Mrs. Mortimer in a low voice.

Then Nan forgot her nervousness, as did her chums, and she and Sunshine Bigfish let their voices out, joining in with the other boys and girls. It was the firm tones of Sunshine that gave confidence to Nan and her chums so that they did better than they had expected to.

Flossie and Freddie's shrill, sweet voices

rose with those of their schoolmates, while the deeper tones of Bert, Jimmy and the older boys helped to make up the volume of sound.

After the first little feeling of nervousness had passed the children did very well, indeed. The opening chorus was a short one, and simple. But after it was over the audience applauded so long and loudly that Mrs. Mortimer called:

"Stay where you are. Sing the encore!"

She had hoped the opening song would be a success and she and Miss Clark had drilled the boys and girls in a second song, or encore, which was now started. That was rendered even better than the first tune, and the applause was louder.

"Oh, I'm so glad they liked it!" murmured Nan as the curtain came down.

"So am I!" exclaimed Sunshine Bigfish.

There were to be other songs in which all the children would take part, but, meanwhile, there were to be individual numbers, or solos, also some duets, trios and quartettes. The main part of the program was made up of separate numbers, and among the performers would be Nan and Sunshine in a duet, and

also in solo numbers, the Indian girl giving the song in her own language that Miss Clark had said was so beautiful but sad.

Bert and Jimmy would do their Indian dance, Bert and John their frog song, and when their turn came Flossie and Freddie were expected to provide amusement with the fireman-fairy song.

The first number after the opening chorus was a duet by Nellie Parks and Grace Lavine. After their first shyness and nervousness wore off the two little chums of Nan's did very well. Their voices were clear and sweet and blended well.

"That was fine!" murmured the Indian girl as the two came back off the stage.

"I'm glad you liked it," said Nellie, and Nan thought Nellie cast a more friendly look toward Shine than she had ever before given the Indian girl.

Joe Norton, the clever little pitcher on Bert's nine, was down next for a recitation, or "piece," as the boys called it. Joe had chosen that old favorite "Horatius at the Bridge," and Miss Clark had drilled him well in the way to deliver it. Joe marched out on

the stage, his hair wet down and slicked back. He looked like anything but the jolly, sturdy lad who faced batters from the pitcher's box. He had on his "best suit," and his mother insisted that Joe wear a flower in his button-hole, which Joe said was "silly." But he wore it just the same.

To her sorrow Miss Clark noticed, as Joe took his place, that he was stricken with "stage fright."

"He's forgotten his lines!" the teacher whispered in tragic tones to Mrs. Boobsey. "Oh, dear!"

Poor Joe stood there, getting redder in the face each moment, and the harder he tried to remember the opening line of his piece the more he forgot. He was in despair, the audience did not quite know what to make of it, and Miss Clark felt very sorry for Joe.

Suddenly from the "wings," or side of the stage, where he was waiting with the other boys out of sight of the audience, Bert Bobbsey hissingly whispered:

"Strike 'em out, Joe!"

It was what he would have called on the ball field to encourage the pitcher after sev-

eral hits had been made off him. Joe heard. His trembling legs stiffened. He forgot the audience, which was just what he needed to do. He felt as if he were out on the diamond against a team he had to beat. In a moment his stage fright was gone and he began the selection and went through it without a break, doing better than even Miss Clark had dared to hope.

"Oh, Joe, that was splendid!" she called to him when he had made his bow and had come back out of sight of the audience which was applauding loudly. "You did exceedingly well!"

"It was what Bert said that made me," Joe answered, with a grin of relief.

Joe's success, after what seemed about to be a failure, gave heart to the other boys, and when their turns came they did well. The Indian dance of Bert and Jimmy made such a hit that they had to go on again, making even a greater success of the encore. The frog song created much laughter when John and Bert gave it.

"When are Flossie and I going out?" asked Freddie, who, with his beloved fire engine, had

been patiently waiting near his twin sister.

"Pretty soon now," answered Nan, who was getting ready to sing a solo.

"Well, if they don't let us start pretty soon Flossie and me, we'll go home!" declared the Little Fireman. "We're getting mighty tired, we are."

"You must wait your turn," said Shine, going over to them. "I'll tell you a little story while you're waiting."

This quieted the small Bobbsey twins who seemed about to go on a "strike," as Bert called it, and Nan delivered her song with great success.

"If I can only do as well as you did I shall be glad," said Shine, as Nan came back off the front stage.

"Oh, you'll do a lot better!" Nan declared. "I know you will."

Before the Indian girl was to give her solo several other girls and boys had numbers, and there was another chorus, or, rather, two of them, by the entire company of boys and girls.

When the curtain came down after the last chorus, so the stage could be "set" for Shine's

song, Nan noticed that her Indian friend seemed a little nervous.

"Now don't be afraid," Nan begged.

"Maybe the audience won't like my song as much as Miss Clark does," was the answer.

"Oh, I'm sure they will," replied Nan cheerfully.

The theater manager had delved among some old scenery that was used before the place had become a movie house and had arranged to "set the stage," as it is called, with some back drops and side pieces that looked like a forest with a stream running through it.

When Shine, in her Indian costume, stood in front of this setting it made such a pretty picture that the audience applauded even before she began to sing.

"She's going to make a hit!" predicted Nan Bobbsey. "I know she is!"

Sunshine Bigfish did. She sang her Indian Lament song very well—indeed, so simply and sweetly that it brought tears to many eyes.

When the last verse came to a close, amid soft chords played by Miss Clark, there was a momentary hush. Then such loud ap-

plause broke out that it brought a glow of pleasure to the dark cheeks of Sunshine. There was no doubt but that the audience liked her song, strange as it was, and in a language none of them understood.

Sunshine bowed, her heart happily thrilled, and came back off the stage. But the applause kept up and Miss Clark, leaving her place at the piano, hurried to the Indian girl's side.

"They want you to sing again," she whispered.

"But I don't know anything more," objected Shine.

"Then sing it over again," urged her teacher, and the Indian girl did, bringing forth more applause.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" murmured Nan, warmly clasping her friend's hand. "I knew you would make a hit! I'm so glad."

"So am I," whispered Jimmy's sister.

It was now time for Flossie and Freddie to do their act, and at last their patience was rewarded. The stage was set with the fairy doll's house and Flossie took her place near it with Arabella Jones in her arms.

The first part of the little act was to present Flossie singing a song to her doll. The song told about how dull everything was and that nothing ever happened.

Then the fairy doll's house was to catch fire and Freddie was to rush on with his engine. Of course the fire would not be real. One of the men on the stage was to flash a flickering red light on the little house, thus making it look as if it were burning.

"All ready now, Flossie," called her mother to the Fat Fairy as the curtain went up.

Flossie was never troubled with stage fright. She was having a good time out of it with her doll, and she sang naturally and well. She sang about how dull and lonesome she and Arabella Jones were even though they were in Fairyland. Flossie sang about wishing something would happen.

Then the red light flashed on the doll house and some young folks in the audience gasped, for it really looked as if the small mansion were burning.

"Fire! Fire! My dollie's house is burning!" sang Flossie.

This was the signal for Freddie to rush on

with his toy fire engine. He was waiting in the wings and his mother called:

"Hurry, Freddie!"

On he ran, dragging his engine, and singing:

"I am the brave fireman! I will save your doll's house!"

As Freddie came to a halt near the make-believe burning toy house, he leaned over and did something to his engine. A moment later there was an exclamation of dismay from those in the front row of the audience, and Bert, watching from the wings, cried:

"Freddie's got real water in his engine, and he's turned on the pump! Oh, wow!"

"My goodness!" gasped Nan.

It was true enough. Freddie, who seldom did anything by halves, had started his "wind up" engine, and the people in the front rows were getting an unexpected shower. Over them and in their faces sprayed the stream of water from the toy engine!

CHAPTER XXIII

BAD NEWS

MR. ANDERSON, the postmaster, who was among the men sitting in the front row that were sprayed with the water from Freddie's engine, raised his hands over his head and exclaimed:

"Why didn't I bring an umbrella!"

At this the other men near him laughed, and Mrs. Anderson, who was sitting beside her husband, whispered shrilly:

"Hush! Don't make a disturbance. A little clean water can't hurt you. There's some on my dress, but I don't care. Do you want to spoil the children's play?"

"No, of course I don't!" laughed Mr. Anderson.

"Then please keep quiet!" begged his wife.

By this time the uneasy movements of those who were getting sprayed, as well as their exclamations, told the others in the audience

that something unusual was taking place.

In another moment there might have been enough laughter over the unexpected shower to have spoiled the act of Freddie and Flossie. But, luckily, Flossie saw what was happening, though it seemed her twin brother did not. So in the midst of his song, while he was telling what a brave fireman he was and how he was going to save the doll's house, Flossie sharply called:

"Turn off that water, Freddie! You're getting everybody all wet!"

"Oh, am I?" asked Freddie, stopping his song. Then, when he saw the little spring pump on his fire engine spraying Mr. Anderson and the others, Freddie shut off the machinery. But he might have saved himself the trouble, for the toy engine held only a little water that night, and it was all pumped out now.

"Well, I'm glad the shower didn't last long!" said the postmaster, with a laugh, as he used his handkerchief to brush the drops off his coat.

"It'll do you good to have a wetting now and then," said his wife.

With the stopping of the water spray, Freddie went on with his song and Flossie chimed in when her turn came so the act went on and was a great success. Only a few in the crowd were near enough to see the water spray on those in the front row, and most of these thought it was part of the act—though of course not meant to sprinkle the audience. That, they knew was an accident.

When the "fire" was out and Flossie and Freddie had sung the closing duet and had bowed themselves off the stage, Mrs. Bobbsey made a dash for the small twins, after they were out of sight of the audience.

"Freddie Bobbsey!" his mother exclaimed, holding him by the arm, "what possessed you to do a thing like that?"

"Like what?" he asked, innocently enough. "Didn't I sing all right?"

"Of course you did," said Miss Clark, trying not to laugh, for it was all really very funny.

"Why did you put water in your toy engine and spray it all over Mr. Anderson and the others?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey.

"You've got to have water in a fire engine,"

declared Freddie. "How could I put out the fire in the fairy doll's house if I didn't have water?"

"You shouldn't have put any water in your engine for this play," said his mother severely. "If I had known you were going to do that I wouldn't have let you! And why did you turn the hose on the people?"

"I didn't mean to do that," explained Freddie, who was sorry enough for that part of it. "I didn't mean to—it was an accident."

"It must have been," decided Mrs. Mortimer. "Anyhow, no great harm was done and the little Bobbsey twins made a great hit," she added. "Really, Mrs. Bobbsey," she went on, for the show was over, Flossie and Freddie having given the concluding act, followed by a general chorus, "I don't know what the committee would have done without your twins."

"I am glad they could help," said their mother, who was quite proud of them, as, indeed, she well could be in spite of Freddie's accident with the water. "And I am so glad that Sunshine Bigfish did so well in her Indian song."

"Yes, so am I," agreed Mrs. Mortimer.

"I hope it will make the other girls more friendly toward her," went on Mrs. Bobbsey. "Really, they don't treat her nicely at all."

"Don't they?" asked Mrs. Mortimer, in surprise. "I am sorry to hear that. I must speak to my Lucile about it."

But there was no need to do this, for some of the older girls of Montrose school who had before the play hardly noticed Sunshine, because she was not in their classes, came up to her after the entertainment and told her cordially how much they liked her song.

"Where did you learn it?" asked Ruth Wonby.

"My father taught it to me," answered Sunshine.

"Was your father Chief Bigfish?" asked Ruth, who was considered one of the smartest, as well as one of the prettiest, girls in the school.

"Yes, my father was chief of his tribe," answered Shine.

"I have read about him," went on Ruth. "He went to Washington once, didn't he, to

see the President and to ask that some of the Indians' land be given back to them?"

"I have heard him say he did that," Jimmy's sister answered. "But my brother knows more about that than I do. It was when I was very small."

"Did you hear that?" asked Grace Lavine of Nellie Parks.

"What?"

"Sunshine's father was Chief Bigfish, and once he went to Washington to see the President."

"Oh, did he?" asked Nellie. "I never knew her father was an Indian of such importance."

"Especially a chief," whispered Grace. "I am going to tell Shine I liked her song."

"So am I," said Nellie.

Soon after that many girls who before had not thought it worth while to be friendly with the Indian girl, were eager to be in her company, now that they heard her father had been a chief.

"Well, I'm glad they have taken her up," said Nan to her mother that night. "Shine is a nice girl, and I'm so glad she had a good part in the show."

"I had a good part, too, didn't I?" asked Freddie, who, with Flossie, was getting ready for bed.

"Yes," chuckled Bert, who was winding tape around a cracked bat, "you had almost too much of a part with your fire engine and water."

So the Charity Show was a great success, thanks to the Bobbsey twins, and a large sum was raised to help the poor.

It was a few days after this, when Bert and his schoolmates were out on the lot practicing baseball, that the young captain noticed Joe Norton was not on hand.

"Where's Joe?" he asked Sammie Todd. "He wasn't at school to-day, but I thought he'd surely come out to practice. We've got a hard game Saturday and we want him to pitch."

"Didn't you hear about Joe?" asked Sammie.

"No! What?" Bert wanted to know.

"He fell down and sprained his wrist. That's why he wasn't at school to-day. He had to go to the doctor's," said Sammie.

"Sprained his wrist?" cried Bert, in dis-

may. "Was it his pitching wrist—his right?"

"I'm not sure about that," answered Sammie. "Maybe it was his left."

"Yes, it was his right wrist," said Charlie Mason.

"Whew! This is bad news!" exclaimed Bert Bobbsey.

CHAPTER XXIV

JIMMY IN THE BOX

FOR a time Bert Bobbsey, plucky little captain of the Montrose school nine, did not know what to do. Neither did any of his chums on the baseball team. The loss of Joe Norton as pitcher was serious.

"Well, we'll just have to get some one else," said Bert, after a while, "and we might as well start practice now."

"Who can we get to pitch?" asked John Marsh.

"I guess we'll have to put Charlie Mason in," the young captain replied.

"I'm not much good," Charlie said.

"You'll have to practice until you are good!" exclaimed Bert. "We need a pitcher."

Charlie had pitched not only in practice but in some games against teams that Bert

felt pretty sure he and his schoolmates could beat, and Charlie had done fairly well, giving Joe a chance to rest.

But Charlie was not as good a pitcher as Joe and every one knew it, including Charlie himself.

"I'll do my best," he promised. "But why did Joe go and get his wrist sprained in the middle of the season?"

"It was a bad time," admitted Bert. "But I guess he couldn't help it."

When he had first organized the nine there had been talk of various boys for pitcher, and when Jimmy Bigfish joined the team Bert had thought that the Indian lad might be a substitute pitcher, for Jimmy could throw stones straighter than any other boy in town. But when it was seen what a good first baseman Jimmy made he was kept there, and there was no further talk of having him pitch. But then Joe was in fine shape and, so far, had been in the box at all important games.

So it was with no very happy hearts that Bert and his chums went to the field where they practiced. They were to play the Midvale nine on Saturday on the grounds of that

club, a few miles from Lakeport, and though it was not so important a game as the deciding one with Hillside, still Bert wanted his boys to win. But with Joe out of the box he did not see how it could be done.

However, practice was started with Charlie pitching, and he did fairly well for a few innings. Then his arm weakened and the other side began to pile up runs. It was when the game seemed lost that a shout arose at the sight of a boy walking across the diamond, and a voice called:

"Here comes Joe!"

"Hi, Joe!" cried Bert, at the sight of his pitcher. "We thought you were in the hospital with a broken arm."

"Not as bad as that," said Joe, with a grin, and the boys noticed that his right wrist was stained yellow from some sort of liniment that had been rubbed on. "I just twisted it a bit, fooling with my brother."

"Can you pitch?" was the all-important question Bert wanted answered, and he was much relieved when Joe answered:

"Well, I can last part of a game, anyhow, and in a few days I guess my wrist will be

all right again. I can pitch now if you want me to."

"We sure do!" exclaimed Charlie. "I'm all in and I'll be glad to have you go in the box."

"Try it, Joe," suggested Bert. "But don't pitch if it hurts you too much."

"Oh, I guess I can stand it," said Joe with grim courage.

So there was a change in pitchers and at once Bert's nine began to play better ball. Not only did the other side stop piling up runs, but Bert's lads took heart from having Joe in the box and began to rap out runs. Bert himself hit a three-bagger when the bases were filled, bringing in three men and almost making a home run himself. So the practice game went to the Montrose school and all the members of the nine were happy.

"What about Saturday, Joe?" asked Bert anxiously as the boys walked home in the dusk of the evening. "Think you can pitch?"

"Sure! I guess so. I'll put a lot more liniment on my wrist. But I tell you what you'd better do, Bert."

"What?"

"You'd better have a substitute pitcher ready in case I give out in the middle of the game."

"Who'll we have?" asked Bert gloomily. "Charlie isn't much good—he admits that himself."

"Try Jimmy Bigfish," suggested Joe. "He showed good pitching at the beginning of the season until you put him on first base. It's easy enough to get other fellows for that position. What we need is a substitute pitcher."

"Well, I'll give Jimmy a trial," decided the captain, and in the next few days, though Joe did not altogether give up his work in the pitcher's box, the Indian lad was put in practice. It was at once seen that he could send in swift balls and also curve them. Opinion was divided as to whether he was as good as Joe. But a substitute was needed and Jimmy was the best.

"We'll keep quiet about this," Bert warned his chums. "Let the Midvale team think we are going to have Joe pitch. They have heard by this time, I guess, about his sore wrist, and they may think they can knock him out of the box. Let 'em! They don't

know we have a good substitute pitcher."

So Jimmy Bigfish did more and more practice, and Joe only pitched a few times, so as to save his wrist for the big game. And the more the Indian boy practiced the better he pitched.

"I'm not so worried now," said Bert on the morning of the day when his team was to go to Midvale to play the school nine there. "If we have to take Joe out of the box we'll have a good chance with Jimmy. We may win after all."

But when Bert and his schoolmates went out on the Midvale diamond for a little practice and saw how much bigger their rivals were and how snappily they threw the ball around and batted it in their practice, then the Montrose team did not feel so sure of victory.

"If we can hold the score down we'll be doing well," Bert said.

"But you'll try to beat them, won't you?" asked Nan, for she and some of her girl chums, with Flossie and Freddie, had come over to the game.

"Of course we'll try!" exclaimed Bert. "But it's going to be hard work. I didn't think they were such a big team."

"Can't you make 'em play with smaller boys?" asked Flossie, and then she wondered why Bert and the others laughed.

"No, we can't do that," Bert answered. "We'll have to grow bigger and stronger ourselves, I guess."

"I'm here!" suddenly announced Freddie, parading up and down in front of the bench where Bert was sitting with his sister for a few moments.

"But you can't play, Freddie," objected Sunshine Bigfish.

"No, but I'm the mascot!" declared the little fellow. "And the last time I was with Bert our side won, didn't it?" he asked his brother.

"Yes, that's right," was the answer. "And I hope we do now, but it's going to be hard work."

"If I had my fire engine here," went on Freddie, "I could squirt water in the eyes of those boys," and he pointed to the Midvale

team practicing on the diamond. "Then they couldn't see good and you would win, wouldn't you, Bert?"

"That wouldn't be fair," said Nan.

"No, I guess it wouldn't be," Freddie admitted after a moment. "But I'm your mascot, ain't I, Bert?"

"Yes," the young captain answered as he left to take his place with his mates, for the play was about to begin.

For a time it seemed that Bert's side was going to do fairly well. Being the visitors, they went to bat first and though the Midvale pitcher was clever, several hits were made off him and when Bert knocked a two-bagger, bringing in two runs, things looked brighter for the Montrose team.

But when it came the turn of the home team to bat, while Joe pitched, there was a different story. Some of his best curves were knocked far out in the field and at the end of the inning the score was five to three in favor of Midvale.

"You'd better put Jimmy in," said Joe to Bert as they came in to bat again.

"No, you are good yet," said the captain.

By hard work the Montrose team got two runs that inning. And by gritting his teeth and refusing to give in to the pain of his wrist, Joe Norton managed to hold the other team down to a no score when they came in to bat.

But in the innings that followed his wrist became weaker and weaker until in the middle of the fifth, when he was pitching and had given two men their bases on balls, Bert looked serious.

"I'll have to give up!" said Joe, with pain showing on his face as he walked half way to home plate to speak to Bert who was catching.

'Put Jimmy in!"

"I guess I'll have to," said the captain.

So the umpire made the announcement:

"Jimmy Bigfish now pitching for Montrose."

The Indian lad, who had been warming up, walked to the box. His big chance had come. Could he turn what seemed like sure defeat into victory?

"Play ball!" called the umpire.

CHAPTER XXV

A GLORIOUS VICTORY

EDWARD LYNN, the best batter on the Midvale nine, stood near the home plate looking at Jimmy Bigfish and smiling. The Indian lad was pitching in a few practice balls to Bert, as allowed under the rules. To his delight Bert saw that Jimmy was putting a beautiful curve on the ball.

"If he can only do that when Ed gets up we'll have a chance," thought the captain and catcher.

"Play ball!" again called the umpire. Jimmy had taken all the practice throws allowed and his arm, he felt, was in fine shape.

"Here's where I knock a home run, fellows!" boasted Midvale's best batter.

But when the ball came over the plate, curving nicely, the umpire called:

"One strike!"

"Aw, I didn't strike at it!" protested Ed.

"No, but you should have!" said the umpire. "It was a good ball. I called a strike on you!"

"Aw, I'll hit the next one!" said Ed, tapping home plate with his bat.

But he missed the next one clean. The following was a ball and then Ed hit a foul which Bert tried hard to get but could not. Ed still had one chance left.

"You're out!" suddenly called the umpire as Jimmy sent in a swift one. It had gone over the plate and when Ed struck at it with all his might his bat missed and the ball nestled snugly in Bert's glove.

"That's the way to strike 'em out, Jimmy!" Bert cried.

"Hurray!" yelled the Montrose nine, and Nan, Sunshine and the other Lakeport girls present added their shrill cheers, while Freddie cried:

"Now we're going to win! I'm the mascot and Jimmy Bigfish is pitching! Hurray!"

"That pitcher can't last!" declared Ed, somewhat ashamed of himself as he walked back to the bench. "He throws 'em in too hard."

But the Indian did last. He allowed only one hit that inning and not a run came in. This gave Bert and his chums such heart that they played harder than ever and instead of the score being several runs against them it was only one. In the following inning Charlie Mason made a home run and then the score was tied.

"Now if we can hold 'em down, Jimmy, and can make one more run, we'll win the game!" said Bert.

"There are two ifs in there," said the Indian, with a smile. "But I'll do my best."

"So will I," promised the captain.

Jimmy, instead of going to pieces as the Midvale players said he would do, improved each inning. He was "as cool as a cucumber," Bert said.

The Indian struck out several men in the innings that followed and those that knocked flies saw them safely caught by the outfielders, so that not a run came in. Once it looked as if Tom Black was going to score when he knocked a long fly to left field, but Danny Rugg was right there and caught it. That

made one out and Jimmy struck out the two others.

That was the ending of the eighth inning. Bert's chums had one more chance at bat, and then if they could get even one run and Jimmy could hold the other team down to no score, the game would be a victory for Montrose.

But when John Marsh got out on a little pop fly, and when Charlie Mason struck out, it began to look bad for Montrose.

"I guess it's all up now," said Joe Norton who sat gloomily on the bench, rubbing his sore wrist.

"Bert bats next," said Jimmy Bigfish.

"He'll have to knock a home run to score," went on Joe.

Trying to quiet his beating heart, for he knew much depended on him, Bert Bobbsey faced the Midvale pitcher. He saw the first ball coming and decided to take a desperate chance. He struck at it with all his might. There was a loud crack and he saw the ball sailing upward and outward, far over center field.

"Run! Run!" yelled Jimmy Bigfish.

Every one on the Montrose nine was yelling now, and so were Nan and her girl friends, while Flossie and Freddie jumped up and down in their excitement. Flossie dropped Arabella Jones on the grass and never even stooped to pick up her doll while she watched Bert run.

And Bert was running faster than he had ever run before.

"If I can only make a home run it will put us ahead!" he thought as he leaped around the bases.

The center fielder was after the ball, but before it could be thrown home Bert had crossed the plate with the winning run—that is, it would be the winning run if, when they came to bat last, the Midvale players were held down to no score by Jimmy Bigfish.

That is just what happened. The Indian pitched better than he had ever thought he could do.

"A lot better than I can pitch!" admitted Joe.

And though one boy got to first base on a hit, that was all. The Indian struck out two

players in succession and the third went out on a pop foul which Bert caught, so that ended the game. Montrose won by a single run, but it was a glorious victory, for the odds had been very much against them.

"Oh, isn't it wonderful!" cried Nan, joyously dancing about.

"Fine!" ejaculated Nellie Parks.

"And your brother helped a lot with his pitching," said Grace Lavine to Shine Bigfish. "He's wonderful, I think!"

"Hurray for Jimmy Bigfish and Bert Bobbsey!" yelled the boys of the Montrose nine and their chums who had come over to see the game.

"We'll beat you next time!" boasted Ed Lynn, captain of the rivals. "We didn't know you had such a good pitcher in reserve."

"We're always going to have him," said Bert, for Joe had suggested that Jimmy be given his place since it seemed that the sprained wrist would not be strong enough for Joe to play well all that summer.

So the Indian lad was given one of the best positions on the team, and, from then on, all the boys of Montrose school were friendly

with him. It was the same with the girls who had not been kind to Sunshine. Following the example of their brothers, the girls accepted the Indian girl for a friend as Nan had, and Sunshine was happy.

"I knew you'd win, Bert," said Freddie when he was allowed to ride home with the victorious team that afternoon. "'Cause I was your mascot, wasn't I?"

"You sure were!" laughed Jimmy Bigfish. "When I heard you cheering for us, Freddie, I knew I was going to strike 'em out!"

That was not the only game Bert and Jimmy helped win for their team that summer and the Montrose nine became well known in the vicinity of Lakeport as a strong young team with a wonderful pitcher and catcher.

As the summer days passed Nan and Sunshine became even better friends than ever. Once, when Nan took the smaller twins out to see Mrs. Carwith, who had gone back to the country when school closed for the summer, and the Indian girl's aunt had given Flossie and Freddie some cookies, the little boy and girl said they were very glad the

two Indians had come to live in Lakeport.

"Shine is going to make me an Indian dress for Arabella Jones," added Flossie.

"Jimmy is going to make me a bow-arrow," boasted Freddie.

At the end of the baseball season, when Bert's nine had won many more games, and were the champions in their class, Jimmy invited the boys out to his aunt's cabin one evening when the full moon was shining brightly.

"We're going to have a green corn feast like my father and the Indian braves had out West," said Jimmy.

A fire was built on some stones, and on these hot stones ears of corn were roasted as only Jimmy knew how to roast them, Indian fashion.

"That's the best meal I ever had!" sighed Bert, after his third ear.

"You didn't make any mistake having Jimmy on the team," said Charlie Mason in a low voice to Bert.

All Bert Bobbsey's schoolmates said the same thing. When, later, Jimmy showed the boys how to make bows and arrows and how to shoot them properly, he was more of a fa-

vorite than ever. Then, when Sunshine made the Indian dress for Flossie's doll, half the girls in Lakeport were eager to be shown how to do the same thing, so Jimmy's sister became as great a favorite with Nan's chums as Jimmy was with Bert's.

One day Freddie's mother saw him putting his toy engine away.

"What's the matter?" she asked. "Are you tired of playing with it?"

"No, but I'm not going to be a fireman when I grow up," answered Freddie.

The little boy often decided this. It would not be surprising if he should want to be something quite different after his next adventure, which is called "The Bobbsey Twins Treasure Hunting."

"What are you going to be?"

"An Indian, like Jimmy Bigfish!" Freddie replied, and he wondered why Nan and Bert laughed.

"And I'm going to be an Indian girl and sing like Sunshine," declared Flossie.

Mrs. Bobbsey smiled and remarked:

"Well, the Indian children are good chums for my twins."

And now, for a time, we shall take leave of the Bobbsey twins and their schoolmates.

THE END





